

Book 09 – His Fame Shakes the World

Chapter 1

Linley and Wharton had been separated for nearly seventeen years.

Seventeen years ago, shortly after the Yulan festival of that year, Wharton had left Wushan Township by the side of Housekeeper Hiri and headed towards the distant O'Brien Empire. At that time, Linley was only ten, while Wharton was six. The two brothers had been very innocent and knew so little about the outside world. And back then, they were supported by Hogg, who had protected them like an old hawk looking after its chicks.

But now, Hogg was long dead. Of the two brothers, one was a Count of the O'Brien Empire, while the other possessed the terrifying power of the Saint-level.

Within the Count's manor.

Linley, Wharton, Housekeeper Hiri, Hillman, Nader, the Barker brothers, Zassler, Jenne, Rebecca, and Leena were all gathered together.

Two rectangular tables had been covered with wine and food.

Wharton and Linley were engaged in conversation regarding what had happened in recent years. Although Wharton had gotten general information regarding Linley from the Dawson Conglomerate, when he personally chatted with Linley, he couldn't help but grow anxious as he listened.

So close. His big brother had come so close to dying.

"During those three years of training in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, followed by the six years of training in the Northwest Administrative Province, although I encountered several dangerous battles, in the end, I arrived without suffering any major harm." Linley laughed. "In the past, I was worried about the Radiant Church. But now? Although I don't have the power to raid their headquarters yet, I have more than enough power to protect myself."

The Radiant Church had been established in the Yulan continent for years now.

For it to be on par with the O'Brien Empire as one of the premier powers of the Yulan continent, it definitely had a terrifying amount of hidden power. From the fact that the War God's College was able to send out three personal disciples who were all at the Saint-level, one could determine that the Radiant Church must surely have quite a number of Saint-level experts of its own.

“Big bro, you, you’ve reached the Saint-level?” Wharton was shocked and excited. Wharton knew how difficult training could be. Although he himself had an extremely high density of Dragonblood in his veins, he was still only of the eighth rank, and even in Dragonform was only at the peak of the ninth rank.

The density of the Dragonblood in Linley’s veins was lower than in his own.

But for Linley to be able to claim that he had more than enough power to protect himself surely meant that Linley had reached the Saint-level.

“After Dragonforming, I indeed am at the Saint-level.” Linley said with a smile.

Hillman and Housekeeper Hiri, seated at the same table, exchanged glances, excitement in their eyes. Housekeeper Hiri’s voice was hoarse with excitement. “I’ve taken care of three generations of Baruch clan members now. The Baruch clan has finally produced a Saint-level combatant.”

The Saint-level was simply on a whole different level.

If a clan had a Saint-level in it, as long as that Saint-level did not die, then the clan would never decay or weaken.

“Wharton.” Linley looked at Wharton. “When I was in the Northwest Administrative Province, I paid attention to your affairs. It seems that you and that Imperial Seventh Princess...”

Wharton nodded honestly. “It’s true, big brother. I truly wish to marry Nina, but right now, the situation is very complicated. Right after Caylan gave up his pursuit of her, Blumer appeared.”

On the road over, Linley had already learned of this issue.

After all, right now, there are many rumors regarding Wharton, Nina, and Blumer.

“Blumer. I’ve heard people in the streets of the imperial capital discussing Blumer. He seems to be the personal disciple of the War God, and is the younger brother of Olivier.” Linley laughed calmly.

Wharton nodded, a hint of worry appearing in his brows again. “Big bro, you don’t understand how famous Olivier is within the O’Brien Empire. Olivier is simply too powerful, terrifyingly powerful. Nine years ago, he already possessed the power of a peak-stage Saint-level. And now...who knows how powerful he has become?”

Linley patted Wharton on the shoulders. "Wharton, don't inflate the deeds of others and downplay your own abilities."

Wharton nodded.

Housekeeper Hiri sighed emotionally. "Young master Linley, you've never lived in the imperial capital. Perhaps you don't fully understand how influential the War God's College is. Even the Emperor himself would be extremely courteous to the personal disciples of the War God's College. The personal disciples of the War God have an extremely exalted status."

Hillman said seriously, "After all, there have been over a hundred generations of Emperors since the War God founded the Empire. Many of the Emperors in the history of the Empire have never even met the War God. But the personal disciples of the War God? They are qualified to meet him. Tell me, who does the War God care more about?"

Linley now understood.

Good point.

A hundred plus generations had passed. Although the War God was the ancestor of Johann, after five thousand years, who knew how many descendants the War God had? How much affection would the War God truly have for each individual descendant of his over the past hundred generations?

Just judging from the fact that many Emperors had never even met the War God, one could tell what the answer to that question was.

By contrast, personal disciples were different. The War God would even personally instruct them.

"It isn't that I'm inflating the deeds of others. It's that I truly am not confident." Wharton was frustrated. "I really don't know what I'll do if Nina ends up being given to Blumer."

Wharton truly could not accept this result.

"Fuck his grandmother, if that Emperor dares to do such a thing, then we bros will go over and abduct the princess and bring her over to be your woman." Gates immediately said.

The entire hall immediately grew silent.

Wharton stared at Gates in shock, then looked at Linley. "Big bro, who is this?"

Only now did Linley come to his senses. He had been so excited at his reunion with his little brother that he had focused on chatting with him, and had totally forgotten to introduce Zassler and the others.

"Haha..."

Linley rose to his feet. "Wharton, let the servants leave first. The attendants outside can leave as well." Linley was about to introduce these people in his group to Wharton.

There was no need to hide anything from one of his own.

"Understood." Although Wharton didn't know what Linley wanted to talk about, he immediately followed Linley's instructions and dismissed the servants and attendants.

Linley first walked in front of Jenne, Rebecca, and Leena. Sighing with emotion, he said, "Wharton, in the past, our mother was forcibly abducted by the Radiant Church, precisely because her soul was pure. Rebecca and Leena had been abducted for the same reason."

Hearing these words, Wharton felt an emotional resonance in his heart.

"When I was in the Northwest Administrative Province, I rescued them. This one is Jenne. Wharton, you need to treat these three girls as you would a big sister or little sister." Linley instructed.

Wharton nodded.

"As for this gentleman..." Linley walked towards Zassler. Actually, whenever Wharton and the others looked at Zassler, they felt their hearts tremble. His thin, skeletal body and his dark green eyes caused fear in the hearts of whoever saw him.

"This is Zassler, an Arch Magus necromancer of the ninth rank. He is the oldest member of my group, and is already over eight hundred years old."

Linley's words caused Wharton, Housekeeper Hiri, Hillman, and Nader to all be astonished.

Necromancer? This was a legendary type of magus. And an Arch Magus necromancer of the ninth rank? It was far harder for a magus to advance than a

warrior, due to the high requirement for spiritual energy. By contrasts, warriors didn't require much spiritual energy.

The spiritual energy of a magus of the eighth rank was generally greater than that of a Saint-level warrior.

Although Saint-level warriors possessed extremely tough, durable spiritual energy, in terms of volume, a magus of the same rank would possess a hundred times the amount of spiritual energy, if not more.

"Eight hundred years old? As I recall, a person's maximum lifespan is only five hundred years, unless he reaches the Saint-level." Housekeeper Hiri suddenly said.

The Saint-level experts had an essentially unlimited lifespan, but humans who did not reach the Saint-level couldn't live for more than five hundred years.

"Haha..." Zassler's ancient voice rang out. "You are referring to normal people. Let me tell you something. Those magi who train in the three ultimate types of magic, Oracular Magic, Life Magic, and Necromantic Magic, have extremely long lives. Of the three, we necromancers possess the longest lifespan."

Zassler glanced with an evil look at the group. "If one of you were about to die from old age, you can come find me. Given my relationship with Linley, I can help you transform your body into a zombie-body and allow you to never perish."

Never perish?

This was the goal of countless people. But a zombie-body? Just from the sound of it, one could guess that it must be one which belonged to a departed soul.

Wharton, Housekeeper Hiri, and Hillman all squeezed out a smile. They really were rather nervous in dealing with an Arch Magus necromancer.

"Zassler." Linley looked unhappily at Zassler.

Zassler's eyes flashed with green light as he laughed, "I'm just joking with your little brother and his friends. Transforming a body into a zombie-body isn't an easy task either."

Linley shook his head, then walked over to Barker and his brothers.

"It's finally our turn." Gates intentionally puffed out his chest. Wharton's eyes lit up as well. All five of the brothers were as tall as Wharton, and they were much more

muscular than him. Those long-handled greataxes in particular clearly were extremely heavy weapons.

“Wharton, have you heard of the Armand clan?” Linley looked at his younger brother.

“The Armand clan? Can it be...the Undying Warrior clan?” Wharton’s eyes lit up.

Linley nodded with satisfaction. “Right. Barker, Ankh, Hazer, Boone, Gates. These five brothers are the descendants of the Armand clan, and all five of them are Undying Warriors.”

“All five of them are Undying Warriors?” Wharton was shocked. Next to him, Hiri and Hillman were stunned as well.

Being a descendant of the Armand clan and being an Undying Warrior were totally different concepts.

For example, although Hogg was a descendant of the Dragonblood Warrior clan, he himself wasn’t a Dragonblood Warrior. It was very rare that one of the Supreme Warrior clans would produce a genius actually capable of transforming into a Supreme Warrior.

“Right.” Linley nodded.

Seeing the astonished look on Wharton’s face, the five brothers felt extremely proud.

“The Armand clan had fallen on extremely hard times, and even their ‘Secret Undying Manual’ had been lost. Fortunately, Lord Cesar helped out.” Linley said gratefully. “Wharton, amongst these five brothers, Barker, Ankh, and Gates have already reached the ninth rank of power. The other two are at the peak of the eighth rank.”

“Ninth rank!” Wharton was frightened when he heard this.

“Big bro, are you saying that...?”

“Right. After transforming, all three of them have Saint-level power.” Linley smiled.

Wharton, Hillman, Housekeeper Hiri, and Nader’s hearts were filled with a hot gush of excitement. They were already very excited upon learning that Linley possessed the Saint-level of power, but who would’ve expected that three more Saint-level combatants would have popped up?

Four Saint-level experts!

What a terrifying force this was.

A basis for being confident!

A very strong basis for being confident. Previously, Wharton had been worrying about how he would go about struggling with Blumer. But now that his big brother had come with this group of people, Wharton felt like a beggar who had suddenly acquired a trillion gold coins.

"Lord Hogg, can you see this? Can you see this?" Hillman repeated emotionally.

If Hogg was still present, he would definitely be very happy upon witnessing this.

"Wharton, this is a magical beast that I tamed in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts. His name is Haeru. Haeru, greet everyone." Linley said with a laugh.

The Blackcloud Panther that had been lying on the ground stood up. He swept Wharton and the others with his cold, dark eyes, and then spoke in the human tongue. "Haeru pays his respects to you all."

Wharton stared at Linley in astonishment. "Big brother, this magical beast, this magical beast just..."

"Right. Saint-level magical beast." Linley nodded.

The throats of Wharton, Hillman, Hiri, and Nader all clenched. Good heavens. Magical beasts, by their very nature, were stronger than humans of the same level. Generally, only peak-stage Saint-level human experts would be able to defeat any Saint-level magical beasts.

Linley was a Saint-level expert. Fine. But his magical beast was as well?

"Hrmph."

A cold sneer could be heard. Wharton and the others all turned upon hearing it. The sound came from Bebe, who was seated next to Linley. Bebe's head was arrogantly raised.

"Bebe." Seeing Bebe's familiar figure, Wharton felt very close to him. After all, Bebe had been with Linley early on. When they were young, Wharton had often played around with Bebe as well. "Bebe, how does it feel to be travelling alongside a Saint-level magical beast? You must really worship him, right?"

Bebe stared at Wharton, then said loudly, "Wharton, you stinking little punk! What sort of magical beast do you take me, Bebe, to be? That fellow Haeru, even at the Saint-level, he isn't a match for me, Bebe!"

"Aaaah!"

Wharton and the others had shocked expressions on their faces, as though they had seen a ghost. They could accept that this mysterious panther-type magical beast was a Saint-level magical beast, but Bebe? They had all watched as Bebe had first followed Linley when they were young.

That adorable little Shadowmouse had actually reached the Saint-level as well.

"Bebe is indeed stronger than me." The Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, once more growled in the human tongue.

Bebe raised his little head high, his eyes filled with self-delight.

Chapter 2

Six Saint-level experts was simply too shocking. Only after a long time did Wharton and the others finally calm down from their manic excitement. But even after calming down, their hearts were still filled with boundless joy.

They had been worrying this entire time about what to do about Wharton and Nina.

Blumer's status as the personal disciple of the War God and the younger brother of Olivier was giving them a huge amount of pressure. But now, they felt complete confidence in their ability to contend.

Wharton's face was radiant with smiles. His older brother had brought this many powerful experts. Wharton could almost visualize the scene of his marriage with Nina.

"Big bro, thanks. Cheers." Wharton raised his wine cup.

Laughing, Linley raised his own as well.

Wharton had worshipped Linley, ever since he was young. A magus coming out of Wushan Township who was accepted to the Ernst Institute was already something incredible. But now, a scant seventeen years later, Linley actually was in possession of two Saint-level magical beasts and was followed by three Saint-level experts.

“Big bro, in a few more days, it’ll be the Yulan festival again. You are almost twenty seven years old by now. When are you planning to get married?” Wharton leaned over and whispered into Linley’s ear while snickering.

“You punk.” Linley laughed. “Let’s not discuss this issue for now.”

“Oh.” Wharton nodded obediently.

Although Wharton was now an Imperial Count and was a huge man who stood 2.2 meters high, in front of Linley, he still acted the same as he did when they were young.

“Actually, Leena and the other girls are all quite good.” Wharton whispered secretly.

Linley gently smacked Wharton upside the head.

“I’ll stop, I’ll stop. Let’s drink, let’s drink.” Wharton hurriedly said.

Housekeeper Hiri and Hillman, seeing Linley and Wharton chat like this, felt boundless joy in their hearts. Exchanging glances, they began laughing together.

Linley and his little brother were extremely happy in those first few days of Linley’s arrival. However, Linley had instructed Wharton that although it was fine to reveal the news of himself and Haeru being at the Saint-level, for now the news that Bebe and three of the Barker brothers had reached the Saint-level as well must be hidden.

Barker, his brothers, and Bebe were an important hidden force for Linley.

In addition, in the entire O’Brien Empire, there was virtually none who knew that Barker and his brothers were Undying Warriors. Thus, maintaining this secret was easy.

Just the presence of two Saint-levels, Linley and the Saint-level magical beast Haeru, was already enough to cause dread in the hearts of others.

Year 10008 of the Yulan calendar. December 30th. This was the day before the Yulan festival. It was snowing on this day, and the entire O’Brien Empire was covered with snow, as the entire world seemed to turn white.

Boulder Street. Count Wharton’s training grounds.

Although the snow was flying about, Linley still sat in the meditative position in the middle of the grass. As for Wharton, such a powerful man as himself wouldn’t care about snow.

“Whoosh.” Wharton’s bare upper body was brimming with power and heat. He put down the warblade ‘Slaughterer’ to one side, preparing to take a rest. But just as he turned to look at the nearby Linley...

“Hrm?”

Wharton found, to his astonishment, that although the snow was flying everywhere, whenever any snow approached Linley, it would ‘avoid’ him, passing by him in a circular line. It was as though there was an invisible tornado around Linley. Not a single snowflake had fallen onto Linley’s clothes.

“What’s this?” Wharton was a bit shocked.

Linley, who had been meditating, suddenly opened his eyes. “Wharton, what are you looking at?” Although Linley had been in deep meditation, when someone paid attention to him, Linley would notice.

“Big bro, that snow...how? Could this be the ‘impose’ level mentioned in our clan’s records?” Wharton said in astonishment.

Smiling, Linley said, “Wharton, once you reach the level of ‘impose’, it is true that you can prevent the rain or the snow from landing on your body. However, this requires that you whole-heartedly concentrate on utilizing the ‘imposing force’ of the surrounding area. It is impossible to do this at the ‘impose’ level while one is meditating and not focusing on it.”

Just then, Linley hadn’t been intentionally preventing the snowflakes from reaching him. However, all it took was a thought, and the snowflakes couldn’t come near him.

“What lies beyond the ‘impose’ level, then?” Wharton truly admired his big brother from the bottom of his heart.

Wharton had trained hard for so many years, and had received the finest instruction from the O’Brien Academy, but to date, Wharton had only reached the ‘wielding something heavy as though it were light’ level as described in his clan’s records.

Actually, there was no need for Wharton to be too modest. The reason why Linley had been able to make such astonishing improvements, aside from his natural talent, was the fact that he was greatly assisted by his exceptional elemental essence affinity.

To ordinary people, elemental essence affinity only represented that one would be able to gather mageforce faster. But to experts, it represented that one would more easily be able to attune with nature, and understand the Laws of the world.

"This part of the 'Profound Truths of the Wind' which I have gained insight into." Linley laughed calmly. "This is just a simple application of it."

"Profound Truths of the Wind?" Wharton's eyes lit up.

"Continue with your training." Linley said, then closed his eyes again, returning to his meditation.

Actually, nowadays Linley didn't spend too much time on his stone sculpting, unless he was seized by a sudden desire. When that desire came, Linley would more easily enter the correct state of mind, and the benefits to him would be better.

These days, the effects of normal stone sculpting were about the same as Linley simply meditating.

The reason was at this point, given Linley's understanding of the Laws of the Wind and the Laws of the Earth, when Linley meditated, he could easily become one with nature, giving him essentially the same benefits as he had when sculpting under normal conditions.

This sort of meditation on the various Laws was also helping to improve Linley's spiritual energy at a constant rate of growth.

Around nightfall.

Linley, who had been quietly meditating this entire time, suddenly revealed a hint of a smile on his previously expressionless face. And then, Linley's lips moved slightly. Shortly afterwards...

"Swish!"

Linley, who had been seated, suddenly moved at a terrifyingly fast speed. At the same instant, nine different Linley's suddenly seemed to appear at different locations of the training ground.

After the nine blurred images disappeared, Linley once again appeared seated in the meditative position in the training grounds.

Only now did Linley open his eyes. "The ninth-ranked wind-style 'Windshadow' spell, famed as the most powerful speed-enhancing spell, lives up to its name. It can actually allow me, in my human form, to reach the speed of a Saint-level."

Right!

Magic of the ninth rank!

Roughly a year and a half after Linley had entered the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, he had reached the eighth rank as a magus. But from the eighth rank to the ninth rank as a magus, the amount of spiritual energy required was astonishing. Even the most brilliant of geniuses would require at least ten years.

But due to his constant meditating, Linley's spiritual energy had grown at a rapid rate.

After spending just seven years, he had finally broken through and reached the level of an Arch Magus of the ninth rank.

"Tomorrow is the Yulan festival. The day before the Yulan festival, I reached the level of an Arch Magus of the ninth rank, eh? Sheesh..." Linley felt extremely happy.

Magi possessed extremely powerful attacks. If you gave a magus sufficient time, a magus could definitely use his spells to defeat a warrior of the same level. The wide area spells of magi were particularly astonishing.

"Tomorrow, I will be twenty seven years old. A twenty seven year old dual-element Arch Magus of the ninth rank. This should be a first in history." A look of confidence was on Linley's face.

How incredible.

A twenty seven year old dual-element Arch Magus of the ninth rank. This was a terrifying record which had never before appeared within the history of the Yulan continent. The previous record holder had reached the ninth rank and become an Arch Magus only after he had turned thirty.

"Wind-style magic includes the Savage Tornado spell, which can easily deal with an army of a hundred thousand soldiers. As for earth-style magic, the 'Castle of Earth' can be considered a large-scale defensive spell..." Linley had to admit that the more powerful a magus was, the more terrifyingly useful the battle applications of their magic became.

Magi also possessed very powerful one-on-one spells as well.

"The ninth-ranked wind-style spell, 'Void Extermination'. Reputedly, as long as one has enough mageforce, this is a single-target spell that can even kill Saint-level experts. It truly is monstrously powerful." Linley couldn't help but sigh in praise.

Wind-style magic was very valiant and mighty. 'Void Extermination' was the most powerful attacking spell out of all spells of the ninth rank in every discipline. The

'Dimensional Edge' spell, in turn, was the most powerful attacking spell out of all forbidden-level spells.

The earth-style in turn was legendary for its defensiveness, whether in self-protection or in large-scale protection.

When an earth-style magus of the ninth rank utilized the 'Supergravity Field' spell, he could cause the hearts and veins of other experts to explode and cause them to instantly die. After all, although some people had powerful muscles, their hearts and their blood vessels weren't necessarily that tough.

"However, to me, the most useful spell is still the Windshadow spell. The most powerful speed-supporting spell!"

In his human form, Linley had less than half the speed he possessed in his Saint-level Dragonform. But by relying on the Windshadow technique, his speed in human form could rival his speed in Dragonform. How terrifying!

The day of the Yulan festival. The sun was bright and high in the sky, casting its glow on the snow-covered trees and rooftops, which gleamed dazzlingly. The entire imperial capital seemed to be much brighter than normal.

On this day, the imperial capital was arranging large-scale celebrations as well.

Within a carriage.

Watching the festivities, Wharton and Linley were sharing a carriage while chatting about Nina, and what to do about her.

"Wharton, in two days, bring me to visit the Emperor." Linley said directly.

"Visit his Imperial Majesty?" Wharton stared at Linley in astonishment.

Linley said with a calm laugh, "I have no grudges against the O'Brien Empire. If the Emperor is willing to allow Nina to marry you, I wouldn't mind settling down here in the O'Brien Empire."

Wharton looked at his older brother. In his heart, he understood what Linley was saying.

"But if that Emperor doesn't know what's good for him and insists on marrying the Seventh Princess to Blumer, then we'll have to resort to our backup plan. We'll abduct Nina and then the two of you can elope." Linley looked at Wharton.

"Wharton, are you ready to accept this result?"

Wharton was silent for a moment. "Of course I am. I don't feel too great a sense of loyalty to the O'Brien Empire. But Nina..."

"The Seventh Princess would refuse?" Linley asked.

This was a major issue.

Wharton shook his head. "I know her. When I was competing against Caylan, Nina once said that if the Emperor really tried to force her, she would elope with me. But Nina is afraid that we wouldn't be able to make it."

"You don't need to worry about that, unless the War God personally intervenes." Linley said calmly.

Linley knew that given the War God's status, he wouldn't get involved in these minor issues. Only if the Empire truly suffered a severe crisis would the War God show himself.

Normally speaking, the War God wouldn't even get involved if an Emperor was assassinated.

The War God had countless descendants. If one Emperor died, another would succeed him. As long as nothing threatening the entire foundation of the Empire occurred, the deity-like War God would not interfere.

Three days later, a carriage came to the gates of the imperial palace. A tall young man dressed in a gentleman's suit, alongside a young man dressed in a long black robe, stepped out of the carriage.

"Count Wharton, who is this?" The palace guards asked. Given their keen eyes, they could clearly tell that the person next to Count Wharton was no ordinary individual.

With a calm laugh, Wharton said, "This is my older brother. I wish to take him to see his Imperial Majesty."

The palace guards didn't make any difficulties for them, immediately allowing them in. Actually, it generally wasn't too difficult for one to be granted entry into the palace. Anyone with some status could bring people inside.

This was because the palace itself was enormous. If one wanted to enter one of the important areas of the palace, however, the guards would be much more restrictive.

"Stop!" Two guards shouted. "Count Wharton, who is this person by your side?"

“Please send a message. This is my older brother, Linley. I am bringing my older brother to meet with his Imperial Majesty.” Wharton said directly.

“Please wait here first.” One of the guards shouted, before turning and running inside the courtyard.

There were very many experts within this courtyard. Without the express permission of the Emperor, the various nobles did not dare to rashly barge in. A while later, that guard came running back. “His Imperial Majesty has permitted you to enter.”

“There really are quite a few experts here.” As Linley walked into the courtyard, he could easily sense the locations of one expert after another from the flows of the nearby wind elemental essence.

After walking for a while and taking some roundabout paths, they arrived at a classical, refined study room.

“Your Imperial Majesty.” Wharton called out in a loud voice.

“Haha, Wharton, I hear your big brother Linley has arrived? Come, quick!” Emperor Johann’s clear and bright voice rang out from within the study.

Smiling, Linley stepped into the study.

Chapter 3

Emperor Johann had heard of Linley’s fame long ago.

That ‘second genius magus’ in all of history who had also reached the exalted rank of grandmaster sculptor at the age of sixteen. An absolute genius. When Johann had learned of Linley and his history, he couldn’t help but sigh repeatedly with admiration.

He watched as Linley walked in.

“He indeed appears to be a man of great talent.” Johann sighed to himself. Be it in either his physical proportions or his reserved personality, Johann could tell that Linley did indeed have that unique aura of a grandmaster sculptor.

“Greetings, your Imperial Majesty.” Linley bowed fractionally.

"How dare you." The palace attendant next to Emperor Johann said in a shrill voice. "How dare you not kneel and kowtow before his Imperial Majesty?"

Linley swept the attendant with his cold gaze. The palace attendant suddenly felt as though he was being stared at by a viper, and he couldn't help but shiver.

"A master artisan such as Linley is someone whom We have admired for a long time. Naturally, there is no need for him to kneel and pay any obeisance." Johann glanced at his nearby attendant, and the attendant no longer dared to speak.

In the O'Brien Empire, generally speaking, ministers needed to kneel on one knee before the Emperor. But people such as Blumer, a personal disciple of the War God, only needed to bow slightly.

"Wharton." Johann looked at Wharton, who stood next to Linley. "We have heard long ago that you had an older brother. Why is it that you have only brought him to see Us today?"

Wharton immediately said, "Your Imperial Majesty, your servant's older brother has only recently arrived in the imperial capital."

Emperor Johann nodded calmly, then looked at Linley. With a laugh, he said, "Master Linley, I heard that at the age of seventeen, you became a dual-element magus of the seventh rank. After ten years have passed, might I ask what level you have now reached?"

Linley smiled. "After ten years of painstaking training, just a few days ago, I stepped past the gateway into the ninth rank."

"An Arch Magus of the ninth rank?" Johann blinked.

"What?" A surprised shout from behind the Emperor. Linley casually glanced at the covering screen placed behind the Emperor's seat. As soon as he had entered, Linley had known that there were two experts of the ninth rank hidden there, one a magus, one a warrior.

Johann glanced backwards as well.

Knowing that they had revealed themselves, those two came forward. One was dressed in a loose, long magus robe, while the other was wearing a classic warrior's outfit.

"These two are Our guards. They, too, were shocked at your advancement, Master Linley." Johann laughed calmly.

"A dual-element Arch Magus of the ninth rank. Linley, might I ask how old you are this year?" That silver-haired magus stared at Linley. As a magus, he naturally knew how incredibly difficult it was for one to increase one's level of spiritual energy.

Throughout history, more than ten warriors had reached the Saint-level in their twenties.

But in all of history, there was not a single Arch Magus of the ninth rank who reached that rank before the age of thirty. The rate of advancement for spiritual energy was something which couldn't be increased by any known means. It required one to slowly accumulate it, one step at a time.

"My older brother is twenty seven years old this year." Wharton spoke out.

"Twenty seven!" Hearing this number, that magus of the ninth rank had a very...amusing...look of shock on his face.

History was history. History included the records of countless geniuses over tens of thousands of years. There were a few people who reached the ninth rank after the age of thirty, but that was ancient history. In the past few centuries, there hadn't been a single person who had reached the ninth rank in their thirties.

But...

"Twenty seven. Twenty seven!" That silver-haired old man laughed at himself. "I reached the rank of Arch Magus of the ninth rank when I turned 170, and I thought I didn't do too bad. But compared to you, Master Linley..."

The silver-haired old man sighed, shaking his head.

The difference was simply too extraordinary.

"Mr. Gerhaus, in the past, how old was the youngest Arch Magus to reach the ninth rank?" Johann immediately asked.

The silver-haired old man said respectfully, "Your Imperial Majesty, according to the historical records, the youngest Arch Magus of the ninth rank was an absolute genius from over thirty thousand years ago. He reached the ninth rank at the age of thirty two. In more recent history, from the beginning of the Yulan calendar to now, the youngest genius magus to reach the ninth rank did so at the age of thirty five."

In training battle-qi, if one possessed or acquired some special treasures, perhaps their battle-qi would be greatly enhanced.

One's level of understanding might suddenly jump as well from a flash of insight.

There had been people who had reached the Saint-level in their twenties!

But spiritual energy wasn't something that you could easily increase at will. Even by using the Straight Chisel School of stone sculpting, Linley had only gained that sudden breakthrough and increase a single time, when he was sixteen. In the past ten years, he had been slowly, painstakingly training nonstop. Only then had he managed to reach the ninth rank.

"I've heard that Master Linley isn't just a magus. You are also a powerful warrior?" Emperor Johann smiled towards Linley.

Linley smiled calmly. "Your Imperial Majesty, you can have that person next to you give me a try."

That warrior of the ninth rank pursed his lips. "Can it be that Master Linley is such a genius that you have reached the level of a warrior of the ninth rank as well?"

"Mr. Lancy, go ahead and give him a try. But you must be careful. Master Linley is of the Dragonblood Warrior clan." Johann laughed.

Mr. Lancy immediately drew his pitch black broadsword.

Linley only flipped his hand over, allowing Bloodviolet to appear in his palm. Against a warrior of the ninth rank, he didn't even need to transform.

"Hrmph." A layer of illusionary, stellar light seemed to suddenly cover the broadsword in Mr. Lancy's hand. "Mr. Lancy is the student of the Stellar Sword Saint." Johann explained.

Stellar Sword Saint?

Linley wasn't even concerned about the Stellar Sword Saint himself, much less his disciple.

"Swish..." The broadsword seemed to split apart the air itself, chopping against Linley with seemingly enormous power. Linley just stood there, not even moving. Bloodviolet flashed...

Mr. Lancer suddenly felt as though the entire world was filled with violet light, and that all the surrounding space had suddenly been locked and frozen.

“Bam!” The flat of Bloodviolet’s blade struck against Lancy, knocking him flying back and smashing against the stone screen. The screen split apart, and Lancy spat out a mouthful of blood as he fell to the ground.

Steadying himself with his hands against the floor, Lancy slowly rose to his feet. His eyes didn’t have a hint of arrogance in them. Instead, he said with gratitude, “Thank you for being merciful, Master Linley.” The flat of the blade had contained such tremendous force when it struck against him. If it had been the edge of the blade, he definitely would have died.

“Of course. It was just a sparring match.” Linley said casually.

“Master Linley, you have already mastered the level of using the force of the heavens and the earth. My master once said that in order to reach the Saint-level, one must master this level. I am too far off from your level, Master Linley.” Lancy knew his own limits.

When sparring against his master, he had previously experienced this sensation of the space around him having been frozen and locked.

Emperor Johann’s eyes narrowed.

The Empire’s intelligence regarding the Dragonblood Warriors was quite detailed. If a person were able to reach the ninth rank in human form, then after Dragonforming, that person would definitely be at the Saint-level of power. And if they were able to reach the Saint-level in human form, then in Dragonform, they would definitely be invincible amongst Saint-levels.

“The Saint-level...”

Linley’s status in Johann’s mind was continuing to rise.

“Haha...master Linley, you truly are the most incredible genius that We have ever seen. Even Olivier cannot come close to competing with you.” Johann laughed loudly.

As a warrior, Olivier perhaps was on par with Linley.

But as a magus? Who could compete with him, the greatest genius in all of history?

As a stone sculptor? Linley had been acclaimed as a grandmaster sculptor at the age of sixteen. Every aficionado of stone sculptures was filled with worship towards him.

It was very hard to reach the peak of any field. For someone to reach the peak of three fields...only the word 'genius' could be used to describe him.

"Your Imperial Majesty." Linley didn't want to waste any time with Johann. "I just recently arrived at the imperial capital. There are many things I don't understand too well regarding the affairs of the Empire. But I understand that my younger brother Wharton truly likes the Seventh Princess, Nina. In my capacity as the clan leader of the Baruch clan, I would like to ask you, your Imperial Majesty. Would you be willing to allow Nina to marry into my Baruch clan?"

With Hogg's death, Linley had become the leader of the Baruch clan.

But this so-called clan only had two members to it.

"This..." Johann was put in a very difficult situation by Linley's sudden ambush.

Linley was indeed a genius, and Johann's heart had been moved.

There were quite a few Saint-level warriors in the O'Brien Empire. The War God's College alone had several. But Saint-level Grand Magi could be counted on one hand. And perhaps only a single one of them would obey the commands of the imperial clan.

Perhaps in one-on-one combat, Saint-level Grand Magi were not exceptionally powerful.

But in times of war, Saint-level Grand Magi were incredibly dangerous.

Just think about it. If a Saint-level Grand Magus were to directly cast a destructive forbidden-level spell over your capital, how much damage would be caused? The million man army that you painstakingly built up might be destroyed in an instant by a single forbidden-level spell such as the 'Annihilating Tempest'.

A dual-element Arch Magus of the ninth rank at age twenty seven.

If someone were to tell Johann that a genius such as this wouldn't be able to reach the Saint-level and become a Grand Magus, Johann most likely would curse out that person as being mentally retarded.

"Human talent."

The allure of a Saint-level Grand Magus was much higher than that of a Saint-level warrior.

“Master Linley, please permit Us some time to consider it.” Emperor Johann’s attitude was incredibly friendly.

“Then I and my younger brother will respectfully await your Imperial Majesty’s decision.” Linley said with a calm laugh. “Then, your Imperial Majesty, I bid you farewell.”

“Master Linley, why not enjoy a dinner with Us instead?” Emperor Johann hurriedly said.

“Thank you, your Imperial Majesty, for your kind offer. But I have other affairs to attend to.” Linley said with a smile. A hint of disappointment was on Johann’s face, but he didn’t try to press the issue. Smiling, he said, “Next time, then.”

Linley and Wharton walked out of the inner palace. Wharton was extremely excited. “Big bro, I’ve never seen his Imperial Majesty be so humble before. Even facing Blumer, he had never been so modest.”

“The O’Brien Empire has many Saint-level warriors, but very few Saint-level Grand Magi.” Linley laughed calmly. “Most likely, he values my talent in magic.”

A twenty-seven year old dual-element Arch Magus of the ninth rank.

Anyone who heard these words would be terrified out of their wits.

Nobody could say for sure how terrifyingly powerful Linley would be in the future.

“Judging from the look on his Imperial Majesty’s face, most likely he is beginning to seriously consider things. I’ve been in the Empire for quite some time, but I haven’t heard of any Saint-level Grand Magi yet.” Wharton sighed emotionally.

The O’Brien Empire truly had too few Saint-level Grand Magi.

“Hrm?” Wharton suddenly saw someone from afar.

Noticing that Wharton had paused, Linley couldn’t help but ask questioningly, “What are you looking at?”

“Oh, it’s Wharton. What, did you go to visit his Imperial Majesty?” A cold voice rang out. Linley turned to look as well. At a glance, Linley could tell that this youngster in front of him was no weakling.

“Blumer, what are you doing over there?” Wharton said coldly.

Wharton was fairly familiar with the layout of the imperial palace, especially the wing where the Seventh Princess, Nina, resided in. The direction Blumer was headed towards was precisely the direction where Nina's residence was.

Blumer laughed calmly. "What? Aren't I allowed to visit Princess Nina?"

"Visit Princess Nina?" Wharton suddenly grew calm. "Blumer, I'll wager that you haven't been even allowed inside the main entrance."

This indeed was the case.

Blumer had went to visit Nina, but Nina had shut the gate in his face, refusing to see him at all.

Blumer's heart had been filled with anger at this. All his life, aside from his older brother whom he worshipped, he had never lowered himself in front of anyone. After becoming the personal disciple of the War God, he had become all the more self-confident.

"No. I haven't been able to get in."

Wharton laughed calmly. "Blumer, did you think that because you are the personal disciple of the War God, you would definitely be able to marry Nina? Dream on! Big bro, let's go."

Linley shook his head with a calm smile, then turned and left alongside Wharton as well.

"Hold it!" Blumer suddenly shouted.

"Oh?" Wharton turned his head to look at him. "Might I ask, oh mighty personal disciple of the War God, what else do you want?"

Blumer stared coldly at him. "Wharton, I hear you are of the Dragonblood Warrior clan, and that you are quite powerful after you transform. But I don't believe it. Today, I formally challenge you to a duel. Do you dare accept?"

Linley couldn't help but narrow his eyes.

Wharton was briefly startled, and then he laughed loudly. "What do I have to fear?"

"A month from now, at the imperial capital's Colosseum. I'll invite his Imperial Majesty as well as my fellow apprentices from the War God's College to officiate. If you don't have the guts to participate, you can give up." Blumer said coldly.

And then Blumer paid no more attention to Wharton, immediately walking away.

Chapter 4

Linley turned his head to glance at his younger brother. Smiling, he said, "Wharton, this Blumer knows how powerful you are, and yet still challenges you. It seems he is quite confident."

Wharton said confidently, "Don't worry, big bro. Since when have we Dragonblood Warriors feared anyone at the same rank?"

"That's exactly the sort of confidence you should have."

Linley glanced at Blumer's disappearing back. "I noticed the sword this Blumer fellow was carrying. It seems rather special."

"Right. Blumer's sword is extremely fast. When he participated in the competition to become an honorary disciple, he became famous for his fast sword speed. But fast swords are usually not very powerful. He might be able to overcome ordinary opponents of the ninth rank, but given my defensive power, even if he lands a hit on me, he most likely wouldn't be able to break my defense." Wharton was extremely confident. "If the honorary disciple tournament had consisted of a winner-take-all tournament, the victor most likely wouldn't have been him."

Smiling, Linley patted Wharton on his shoulder. "Enough. Honorary disciple of the War God's College? Pfft. Let's go. Time to go home."

As the scions of the Dragonblood Warrior clan, Linley and Wharton both possessed a sort of pride.

Blumer quickly informed Emperor Johann of the duel, and Emperor Johan immediately sent someone to ask Wharton if this was the case. After knowing that this was indeed the case, Johann immediately issued the order to have his subordinates prepare the Colosseum for this duel between two geniuses.

All of the citizens of the imperial capital became excited after hearing of this impending duel.

One was the personal disciple of the War God, the ninth ranked warrior, Blumer.

The other was a scion of the Dragonblood Warrior clan, the genius of the O'Brien Academy, Wharton!

Most importantly...

Both of these geniuses were wooing the Imperial Seventh Princess. Given the common folk's natural propensity to engage in gossip, many people began to say that these two geniuses were battling for the sake of the Seventh Princess. All sorts of rumors regarding Wharton, Blumer, and Nina began to fill the streets and alleyways of the imperial capital.

East Channe. Count Wharton's manor, on Boulder Street. Within the training grounds.

Linley and Wharton were each standing on opposite sides of the training ground. Housekeeper Hiri, Hillman, Barker, and the others were watching from far away.

The duel on February 4th was one which Wharton had to win.

Linley stared directly at Wharton. "Wharton, since Blumer is famous for his fast sword attacks, I will compete with you using fast sword attacks. Don't hesitate in the slightest. Use your full strength in battling me."

"Yes, big brother." His upper body bare, Wharton immediately initiated his transformation.

Azure draconic scales began to cover Wharton's entire body, and his arms and legs began to be covered in scales as well, as his nails also began to lengthen and sharpen. A draconic tail sprouted out from behind him, and a single draconic horn emerged from his forehead.

His eyes were still black, despite an occasional golden light flashing through them.

"This is the true, authentic Dragonblood Warrior form of our clan." Seeing his little brother's transformation, Linley felt quite moved. He immediately said loudly, "Wharton, attack me at full strength. Quickly!"

"Understood."

Wharton's eyes lit up, and he forcefully leapt from the ground, causing the earth where he had been standing to tremble. Wharton transformed into a blur as he charged towards Linley, his hands tightly grasped around the warblade Slaughterer, covered as always with countless bloodstains.

"Wielding something light as though it were heavy!" The Bloodviolet Godsword in Linley's hands, carrying a titanic, heavy force, flew up at a seemingly slow speed

towards the Slaughterer. It actually managed to block the Slaughterer in an extremely strange way.

“Bang!” The two forces collided.

Linley felt as though he had been slammed into by a giant meteor, as the astonishing force from that blow was transmitted to him through the Bloodviolet Godsword.

“He really is ridiculously strong. An ordinary blow from him is actually on par with me in human form using ‘wielding something light as though it were heavy’.”

Linley couldn’t help but sigh in praise. Dragonblood Warriors truly did have an astonishingly powerful level of strength.

Twisting like a tornado, Linley easily dodged past Wharton.

“Swish!”

Nine flashes of violet light appeared. This was just the ordinary attack speed of the Bloodviolet Godsword. As far as Linley was concerned, even if Blumer’s sword was very fast, he probably should only be able to reach this level of speed at best.

Tapping the ground with the point of his foot, Wharton quickly leapt backwards with a dodge while also using the warblade ‘Slaughterer’ in his hands to block Linley’s attack.

But although he was able to block six of the attacks, the other three attacks from Linley landed on Wharton’s body. These attacks were simply ordinary attacks by Linley in his human form.

“Clang!” “Clang!” “Clang!”

Three metallic ringing sounds could be heard, as three faint white lines appeared on Wharton’s azure blue scales.

“Haha...Wharton, it looks like if I don’t use a bit of power, I won’t be able to hurt you at all.” Linley laughed loudly, but in truth, he was very happy.

Wharton looked seriously at his big brother. “Big brother, don’t hold back.”

In his human form, Linley was only an early-stage warrior of the ninth rank.

But right now, Wharton was already a peak-stage Dragonblood Warrior of the ninth rank. In terms of strength, battle-qi, or defense, he vastly outstripped Linley.

"Lord, if you keep on holding back, I'm afraid Wharton is going to simply beat you down." Gates shouted loudly from the side.

Laughing, Linley shook his head.

"Wharton, be careful."

Linley grew solemn, and then he suddenly began to move at rapid speed. The entire training yard seemed to have suddenly been filled with a wild gust of wind as Linley's body reached a terrifyingly fast speed.

"Whoosh!" The Bloodviolet Godsword chopped towards Wharton, and seemed to press down against Wharton along with the very space around him.

Impose!

Wharton felt an incredible pressure coming towards him, but faced with this dangerous situation, the Dragonblood in his body began to boil. Letting out a deep growl, Wharton exploded forth the Dragonblood battle-qi in his body, allowing this wild strength to be burst forth from his warblade, 'Slaughterer'...

"Swoooooosh."

The locked space was chopped open and the warblade collided directly against Linley's Bloodviolet Godsword.

But Linley's Bloodviolet only trembled slightly, then immediately transformed into six sword-shadows. At such close range, Wharton was totally unable to use his warblade to block it.

"Haargh!" Wharton clenched his left fist, which suddenly had become covered with azure light, then smashed it against the nearest sword-shadow.

"Bam!" "Bam!" "Bam!" "Bam!"

The six sword-shadows once more transformed into a single physical shape as Bloodviolet once more pierced towards Wharton, carrying with a terrifying penetrative aura which made Wharton tremble.

Wielding something light as though it were heavy! As fast as lightning!

In the blink of an eye, Linley had stabbed four times at a single spot on Wharton's body. These repeated stabs pierced through Wharton's battle-qi and his protective scales, punching into his flesh.

As soon as he pierced through the scales, however, Linley immediately retracted his sword and flew back.

Wharton stood there, stupefied, then raised his head to look at Linley. Disbelievingly, he said, "Big bro, how could you be so fast?" He didn't even have the ability to react. From this, one could imagine in what a short period of time those attacks had occurred. And yet, Linley had sent out four full attacks!

"You call that fast? If I were to reach my limit, then in a situation like that, I could have sent out another six sword attacks. This was relying purely on speed, not relying on any mysteries or deep insights. If I were to utilize the Rippling Wind technique..." A hint of a smile was on Linley's lips. "In the blink of an eye, I can execute several hundred sword attacks, or even more!"

Wherever there was wind, his sword could appear.

The power of the Rippling Wind technique lay in a single word: "Fast". So fast it seemed like teleportation. But for the speed to reach such a level meant the power of each strike couldn't be extremely high. But with hundreds of sword blows combined together, the total strength was still astonishingly high.

"Hundreds of sword attacks?" Wharton was shocked. "But...good thing Blumer's speed is far inferior to yours, big bro. If he was this fast, I'd rather just admit defeat."

"Never hope to rely on luck." Linley rebuked coldly. "Wharton, are you so sure you know Blumer's absolute highest speed?"

"No, I don't." Wharton shook his head.

"Use your most powerful attack against me." Linley said seriously.

"Yes, big bro." Wharton grew solemn as well. "This attack was one I developed based on my understanding of 'wielding something heavy as though it were light'. The name is 'Single Stroke Execution'." Wharton gripped the warblade 'Slaughterer' with both hands, and a metallic light flashed atop the warblade's edges.

A hint of a smile was on Linley's face.

"That's a rather murderous name." Linley wielded Bloodviolet in one hand.

"Whoosh!" Wharton sped up to his maximum speed, appearing before Linley in the blink of an eye. The warblade, Slaughterer, seemed to dance in his hands, as agile as a falling leaf. "Swish!" It chopped towards Linley.

Although the impression it gave was that it seemed to be moving quite slowly, in the blink of an eye, it arrived in front of Linley. Facing this chop, Linley could actually feel a murderous, bloody aura emanating from it.

Linley didn't dare to be the slightest bit careless.

"Clang!" "Clang!" "Clang!"

Linley seemed to have transformed into the sun as he seemed to radiate a million flashes of violet light. These violet flashes of light all converged against the warblade 'Slaughterer'. The terrifying attack power that the warblade 'Slaughterer' originally had possessed was slowly, yet totally being cancelled out by the force of those countless violet flashes of light.

"Bang!" The warblade was actually sent flying, and Wharton himself was chopped countless times by those flashes of violet light and sent flying as well.

Wharton coughed twice, rubbing his chest as he stood up.

"Not bad. It is quite powerful." Linley said approvingly. "It actually took ten...no, sixteen hits from my sword to cancel out your attack." When using the Rippling Wind, every sword blow was fairly weak.

In truth, if Linley were to attack at full strength, each blow would probably be around 25% of the power of that one chop of Wharton's.

Logically speaking, Linley should've been able to cancel out the attack with just four hits.

"In principle, there shouldn't be any expert of the ninth rank who is a match for you, unless they are a Supreme Warrior, in which case you might have a fight on your hands." Linley said approvingly.

"Also." Linley looked at Wharton. "You need to learn how to more agilely control your battle-qi, and also how to move more fluidly. You shouldn't let the opponent land several blows on you in one spot."

Wharton nodded.

"Lord." A servant ran over and bowed respectfully. "Lord, there is a fellow called Reynolds who says he has come to see you, Lord Linley."

"Reynolds?" Linley's eyes lit up.

Not bothering to chat any longer with his little brother, Linley immediately rushed towards the outside of the manor. Linley hadn't seen his fourth bro, Reynolds, for nine full years.

Reaching the front courtyard, Linley's footsteps slowed.

Seeing the figure outside the gate, Linley felt as though he had gone back in time. His most carefree, happy youthful years had been spent with his beloved bros, when the four young men had went to the Jade Water Paradise to drink and have fun.

Those distant days were so happy.

And now, the current Reynolds...

Reynolds was wearing a long, plain robe. But his waist was now ramrod straight. His long years spent in the army had given Reynolds the aura of a military man. And by now, Reynolds was nearly 1.9 meters tall.

"Fourth bro!"

Reynolds, who had been waiting at the gate, heard the shout. He immediately looked over, and his eyes lit up. Linley had changed as well. That dazzlingly genius had now become much more reserved and composed. "Third bro!"

"Haha..."

The two bros rushed towards each other, clutching each other in an embrace."

"I didn't expect that you, fourth bro, would join the army. It's been seven or eight years now, right? When you were at the gate, I actually wasn't sure if it was you. I was wondering to myself, why has a military official come here?" Linley teased.

Reynolds clubbed Linley on the chest. "Third bro, damn, I had no choice but to join the army. My old man forced me to. What was I supposed to do?"

"Fortunately, this time when I took my leave of absence, Yale sent someone to inform me that you had arrived at the imperial capital. On my way back, I came to pay a visit to your little bro and look for you. I felt sure that upon arriving at the imperial capital, you'd definitely head to your little bro's place. And see? Here you are."

"Haha, let's go inside and chat."

After having been separated for nine years, these bros had countless things to say to each other. They had been separated for nine years. Nine years later, those two youths had both become accomplished young men.

Chapter 5

Night arrived. The imperial capital of Channe was still bustling and beautiful as brocade, but the wilderness outside East Channe was very desolate. On the desolate road, there was a single ghost-like human figure rapidly heading east.

In the blink of an eye, the human figure travelled over a hundred meters.

This person was the personal disciple of the War God, the current rising star of the imperial capital; Blumer Akerlund.

The imperial capital of Channe was surrounded by many mountains. Outside West Channe was the War God Mountain and other mountains, while outside East Channe was a number of unremarkable mountain peaks as well. Blumer quickly arrived at one seemingly ordinary mountain.

At the top of this mountain was a peak that seemed knife-sharp. At the absolute top of this peak, a man was seated in the meditative stance. Looking at how he sat there, one might be forgiven for having the strange feeling that this man had been there for tens of millions of years.

Arriving at the mountain peak, Blumer said respectfully, "Elder brother."

Clearly, the person quietly meditating at the peak of the mountain was Blumer's elder brother, the one known as the Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier. Tonight, there was no moon in the sky, nor any stars. In the darkness, one could only hazily make out Olivier's figure.

"Second brother. Is there something you need?" A cold voice rang out.

Blumer knew that his elder brother had been quietly meditating here on this mountain peak for three full years. These three years, his elder brother had neither eaten nor drank anything. He had used the skies as his roof and the earth as his bed.

Three years ago, when he had seen his big brother, he could sense emanating from his big brother's body a terrifying, incisive aura. That sort of aura gave the impression that with just a thought, Olivier could defeat him.

But after three years, his elder brother seemed to have turned into a boulder on the mountain, without any fierce aura at all.

No one had any idea how powerful the current Olivier had become!

“Elder brother, on the fourth of the next month, which is to say fifteen days from now, I will have a duel with a scion of the Dragonblood Warrior clan at the Colosseum of the imperial capital.” Blumer said respectfully.

“Dragonblood Warrior clan?”

His normally tranquil voice seemed to carry a hint of interest. “According to legend, Saint-level Dragonblood Warriors are experts even amongst Saint-levels. I very much want to exchange blows with a Saint-level Dragonblood Warrior, but Saint-level Dragonblood Warriors have disappeared long ago from the Yulan continent. Mmm. How strong is the person whom you are dueling?”

“After transforming, he should be at the peak-stage of the ninth rank.” Blumer said respectfully.

“Oh. Using the sword arts that I taught you, you should be invincible amongst the ninth rank combatants.” Olivier said calmly. “Enough. You can leave now.”

Blumer hesitated a moment, then said in a low voice, “Elder brother, on the day of my duel, can you come?”

Olivier was quiet for a moment.

“February 4th. Understood. If I have time, I will hasten there.” Olivier’s voice didn’t change tone in the slightest. It was as calm as ever.

“Then I bid you farewell.” Blumer immediately left.

The mountain peak returned to its prior stillness. That human shadow in the darkness didn’t move at all, as though it had always been and always would be part of that mountain peak.

Yulan calendar, year 10009. February 4th. This was the day two geniuses were going to duel, and many people in the imperial capital excitedly hurried to the Colosseum. Those 80,000 Colosseum tickets had been sold out long ago, and today, it wasn’t just people from the imperial capital who were hurrying to watch the duel. There were people from other cities and even other provinces.

Linley's group had arrived at the Colosseum early on, and had been given a private room within it. Linley, Reynolds, and Yale were engaged in active conversation.

"Boss Yale, I didn't expect that you would be able to make it here as well." Reynolds laughed.

Yale's forehead was still covered in sweat. Looking at Linley and Reynolds, he laughed very happily. "After I heard that you arrived at the imperial capital, fourth bro, and that third bro was here as well, even the most important of tasks became irrelevant, and I came. This time, I can also help cheer on third bro's little brother."

"Boss Yale, fourth bro, you all came. Now, we're only missing second bro." Linley said emotionally.

"Second bro is now a Grand Secretary of the Yulan Empire. He has an extremely high status. What's more, given that distance from there to here is over ten thousand kilometers, how can he possibly make it in time?" Yale sighed as well.

Reynolds laughingly cursed, "Back when the four of us were at the Academy, second bro was the most glib and most crafty. He participated in every school activity, and he also was very good at hosting them. I knew even back then that second bro would be suited for officialdom, and see? Just ten years later, he's managed to swindle his way into becoming a Grand Secretary of the Yulan Empire."

"It is fortunate that the current Emperor of the Yulan Empire succeeded to the throne when he did. This caused second bro's position and status to immediately rise." Yale said approvingly.

Footsteps could be heard outside the door.

"Bro, we're heading out to the Colosseum. Let's go." Hearing this call, Yale, Linley, and Reynolds all rose and left the resting room.

In the center of the Colosseum, there was a dueling platform over three hundred meters long and three hundred meters wide. The platform was constructed from enormous slabs of tough rock, and were covered with large-scale magical arrays.

On the east and west sides of the dueling platform were the viewing platforms for the families of the duelists.

Directly in front of the dueling platform was the position reserved for the officiating hosts of the duel.

Wharton, Linley, and the others came out of the tunnel. Seeing the countless teeming human forms surround them in the Colosseum, they couldn't help but feel stunned.

"So many people." Wharton had a forced smile on his face.

The fifth brother Gates said with a laugh, "Wharton, there are eighty thousand people here today. You'd best not lose any face."

The chants from the crowd seemed like the howling of the seas, filling the air. Linley and his group could totally sense the excitement of the onlookers.

The O'Brien Empire was a highly martial Empire. The duel between two ultimate geniuses would attract the attention of countless people. There were 80,000 watchers inside, and outside the Colosseum, there were many people hoping they would somehow have a chance to catch a glimpse of this duel.

Above Wharton's seat, Linley, Yale, Reynolds, Barker and his brothers, and the others all sat down. Blumer's side had arrived early as well.

Blumer had many people with him, over a hundred.

"Plenty of them are honorary disciples of the War God's College. It seems they have come to support Blumer." Linley said with a calm laugh.

He could tell that all of those people were very strong.

"What good does it do him to bring so many supporters?" Yale laughed contemptuously.

Right at this time, the chants began to build. Clearly, with both the participants in the duel having appeared, everyone had become extremely excited.

"80,000 people. The most people I've seen in one location, even in the army, was 10,000 training together." Reynolds stared at the spectacle here in the Colosseum. As the Four Great Empires currently were not in an era of large-scale warfare, it was rare to see the various armies massed together.

"Everyone, silence!"

A voice rang out like a bolt of thunder, covering the entire Colosseum. Those 80,000 viewers immediately quieted down, as they stared at the silver-haired old man in the middle of the Colosseum.

Linley and the others began to chuckle. This silver haired old man was an expert of the ninth rank. Given his prowess in battle-qi, it wasn't hard for him to have his voice cover the entire Colosseum.

"For a duel such as this, even the officiating host must be an expert." Linley sighed ruefully.

The silver-haired old man boomed out, "Everyone, this duel we are about to see is the most important duel in recent history. Of the two participants, one is the personal disciple of the War God, Marquis Blumer. The other is a scion of the Dragonblood Warrior clan, Count Wharton. Both of them are unquestioned geniuses, but who exactly is stronger?"

The silver-haired old man began to laugh. "Soon enough, everyone will know. As for the judges for this day, I expect everyone will be very happy once you learn who they are."

"The first is the personal disciple of the War God, Lord Kenyon [Kai'ni'en]." The silver-haired old man said clearly.

A middle-aged man with graying temples, dressed in a long blue robe, came striding out of a tunnel. And then, with a single step, he seemed to turn into a blur. Lord Kenyon suddenly appeared in the judge's position, then sat down.

The appearance of this Lord Kenyon sent everyone in the Colosseum into a frenzy, as countless shouts and chants could be heard.

"A Saint-level expert." Linley was absolutely certain.

Just then, Kenyon had used a flying technique to directly arrive at the leftmost judge's position.

"The second is our Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of the O'Brien Empire." The silver-haired old man's voice grew higher, and the lavishly dressed Johann, face beaming with smiles, walked towards the judge's seats, taking the middle position.

The arrival of the Emperor naturally instigated yet another bout of wild joy.

The silver-haired old man's face was covered with smiles as well. "After finding out who our third judge is, I too was both shocked and overjoyed." The silver-haired old man intentionally paused a moment, and the 80,000 viewers all fell silent, listening closely. Who was this third judge?

“The third judge is the pride of our Empire...the Monolithic Sword Saint, Lord Haydson!”

As soon as the words ‘Lord Haydson’ came out, the entire Colosseum seemed to go utterly mad, as the countless viewers began to scream and shout excitedly.

“HAYDSON! HAYDSON!!!”

“MONOLITHIC SWORD SAINT!”

Some of the more powerful warriors began to use their battle-qi to shout. The chants sounded like a million thunderbolts ripping through the Colosseum, as everyone went stark raving mad.

“Crazy. They’ve all gone crazy.” Gates was flabbergasted. “Is it worth getting this crazy for a Saint-level expert?”

Zassler glanced at him, laughing. “You haven’t been in the O’Brien Empire for very long. You have no idea how influential the Monolithic Sword Saint is.”

Reynolds’ eyes were filled with excitement as well. “After reaching the Saint-level, Lord Haydson has experienced countless duels and battles, but he has never lost a single time! Even against the other peak-stage Saint-level experts of the Empire, he achieved complete victory. He is the number one Saint-level. No one amongst the Saint-levels can defeat him. The Monolithic Sword Saint – Haydson!”

Linley, Wharton, and the others all stared at the distant tunnel, quietly awaiting Haydson’s appearance.

Haydson finally came out.

Haydson appeared simple and unadorned, the lines of his face as hard and sharp as something from a stone sculpture. He wore only a simple gray robe, and on his back was an earth-colored heavy sword.

His steps were steady and sure. Haydson didn’t use any flying technique. He merely walked forward.

With a single step though, he somehow walked from the tunnel to the officiating host’s platform. With the second step, he somehow arrived next to Emperor Johann, then took his seat next to Johann.

It was as though he had teleported!

“What was that?” Linley had seen something that was utterly unbelievable.

Barker and the others were all stunned as well.

“Was that teleportation?” Wharton murmured.

But Linley was absolutely certain it was not teleportation! As far as Linley knew, there was no one alive who could teleport. Teleportation was just a fairy tale.

“When Haydson walked, the entire earth seemed to tremble. In the blink of an eye, it was as though that long distance suddenly became short, allowing him to travel dozens of meters with one step. It was so relaxed. It didn’t rely on speed at all. With but a single step, he could somehow shorten the distance?”

It was simply too astonishing.

Linley’s own training relied on two different paths. One was on divining the Laws of the Earth, and the other was on attuning with the Laws of the Wind.

This simple technique that Haydson had utilized had something to do with the Laws of the Earth, but...Linley could not understand it at all. How had Haydson done this?

“Whew.”

Letting out a deep breath, Linley calmly sat down.

“He is reputed to be the number one amongst Saint-levels. In all these years, no one has ever defeated him. It makes sense for a person like him to have such capability.” Linley was still very confident.

Haydson might have his own marvelous abilities, but wouldn’t Haydson in turn be unable to understand Linley’s vibrational attacks?

Although they both attuned to the Laws of the Earth, they had each embarked on different paths.

Chapter 6

Both the Emperor Johann as well as the War God’s disciple, Kenyon, immediately stood up, smiling as they greeted Haydson. Haydson acted in a very friendly manner, greeting Emperor Johann and Kenyon as well.

The three judges sat down.

Behind the judges, there were many seats as well, all taken. These people primarily consisted of the likes of the Empress, the imperial consorts, the princes, and the princesses.

"Nina." Wharton saw that Nina was in that crowd of people.

Nina saw Wharton as well. Over the past few days, the Emperor had restricted her from leaving the palace, so Wharton and Nina hadn't seen each other in over a month. Given the depths of their affection for each other, even three days without seeing each other would feel like three years. These thirty days of not seeing each other had been very arduous indeed.

Wharton and Nina exchanged glances. They could sense from each other's gazes the love and affection each bore the other.

"Hrmph." Seeing this, Blumer couldn't help but snort coldly. An ordinary person might not have been able to see this clearly from a distance of hundreds of meters, but Blumer's vision was simply too good. He could clearly see the look in these two people's eyes.

Sometimes, having good eyesight wasn't necessarily a good thing.

The silver-haired old man looked at the Emperor and at the judges. Emperor Johann nodded, and the silver-haired old man laughed. In a sonorous voice, he said, "Everyone, please be quiet. The duel between the two geniuses of the O'Brien Empire is about to start. First, introducing the challenger, the personal disciple of the War God...Blumer!"

The challenger was the first to be announced, while the challenged was the second to be announced. This was the rule.

Carrying a long sword on his back, and dressed in a blue warrior's outfit, Blumer flew several dozen meters into the air, arriving onto the dueling platform.

"BLUMER!"

"BLUMER!"

Many of the 80,000 onlookers began to chant loudly. Clearly, many supporters of Blumer were here today. In the hearts of many people, Blumer's older brother, Olivier, was the pride of the O'Brien Empire.

"Quiet." The silver-haired old man smiled. "Next is Wharton, of the Dragonblood Warrior clan."

“Rumble...” Tearing off his upper body clothes, Wharton bared his torso, revealing his explosively muscular chest, causing many viewers to roar in excitement.

“Hrmph.” Seeing this, Blumer only let out a cold, contemptuous sneer.

Taking the warblade ‘Slaughterer’ in his hands, Wharton leapt directly onto the dueling platform. Given Wharton’s 2.2 meter tall stature, and with that massive warblade in his hands, and his bare upper body...

Wharton emanated a simply heroic aura.

Heroic!

This sort of heroic aura caused many people to begin joyful chants. “WHARTON!” “WHARTON!” These chants began to erupt as well, and these supporters were not any fewer in number than Blumer’s.

“What is so impressive about Blumer, that he was able to become the personal disciple of the War God? Today, everyone shall find out.” The silver-haired old man said sonorously. “As for the legendary Dragonblood Warriors, acclaimed as Supreme Warriors, today, everyone will have a chance to witness them in action as well.”

“I now announce...”

The silver-haired old man’s voice went up in pitch. “This duel has commenced!”

In the blink of an eye, Wharton’s body was covered with azure draconic scales. A draconic horn sprouted forth from his forehead, and that blue draconic tail came out as well. The entire dueling platform began to tremble. Beneath the light of the sun, those azure blue draconic scales radiated a dazzling glare.

“Oooooooo.”

A collective noise of surprise could be heard from the onlookers. None of the people present had seen the Dragonform transformation. This transformation of Wharton’s had totally stunned the watchers.

But after being momentarily stunned, everyone burst into wild cheers of joy.

“Dragonblood Warrior?” All three of the judges watched with their eyes lit up. Haydson looked at Wharton with interest. “It would be wonderful if he was at the Saint-level.”

The legendary Saint-level Dragonblood Warriors were experts even amongst the Saint-levels.

And he himself, the Monolithic Sword Saint Haydson, was an expert amongst the Saint-levels. It had been a long time since Haydson had tasted defeat. But yet if he were to challenge a Deity-level combatant, he would definitely lose. Against that sort of overwhelming force, there was nothing Haydson could do either.

He truly hoped that there would appear a Saint-level combatant capable of defeating him.

Perhaps, he would gain some insights and suddenly break through to the next level, reaching the Deity-level.

“So this is a Dragonblood Warrior?” A twelve year old child holding Nina’s hands who sat next to her said. Nina looked at the figure on the dueling platform, then nodded. “Right. This is the legendary Supreme Warrior.”

Given the relationship between the two of them, Wharton had long ago demonstrated the Dragonform transformation for her.

“Haha, Dragonblood Warrior. Not bad.” Blumer looked at Wharton and began to laugh. “But my Akerlund clan has never believed the Four Supreme Warriors to be all that strong.”

Blumer stared coldly at Wharton as he drew his longsword with a flip of his hand.

The longsword looked like it was forged from a piece of ice, seemingly see-through. Beneath the light of the sun, it radiated all the colors of the rainbow. Blumer confidently looked at Wharton, and he loudly said, “This is the precious sword which my older brother gifted to me: Icedream.”

Wharton hefted the warblade ‘Slaughterer’. In a cold voice, he said, “The warblade, ‘Slaughterer’, the ancestral heirloom of our Baruch clan, the personal weapon of the first Dragonblood Warrior.”

“Oh?” Blumer sneered.

All the onlookers fell silent. They watched with wide eyes carefully trained on this duel between geniuses. They didn’t want to miss a thing.

“Whoosh!”

In the blink of an eye, Blumer seemed to suddenly disappear as a violent gust of wind suddenly appeared out of nowhere in the dueling platform. This was a gust of wind created by Blumer's speed.

The wind blasted against Wharton's face, but Wharton simply stood there without moving.

"Hrm?" Wharton suddenly noticed Blumer out of the corner of his left eye. Just as Wharton turned and prepared to attack, he suddenly sensed another gust of wind ambushing him from his right.

Indeed.

Blumer's real body was to his right.

Laughing coldly, Blumer looked at Wharton as he mercilessly chopped towards Wharton with Icedream. But Wharton, his back facing Blumer, suddenly smashed with his iron-whip-like draconic tail.

"WHAP!" The draconic tail smashed viciously against Icedream, with part of the tail landing against Blumer's body as well.

"BAM!"

Blumer's body was sent flying by that blow as if he were but a sandbag. In mid-air, Blumer recovered with a beautiful somersault, landing on one knee at the edge of the platform.

All the viewers held their breath, not daring to chant or shout.

"Ugh." Blumer spat out a bit of blood, then stared at his chest, where the draconic tail had struck. His clothes had been ripped apart. Although his chest had been protected by battle-qi, the battle-qi had been ripped open. A visible wound was on his chest, and blood was slowly leaking out.

Only now did Wharton turn around, staring at Blumer with his cold black eyes. A golden light flashed through those eyes.

"What powerful force." Blumer said in a low voice.

Without question, no warrior at the same level possessed the same strength or power of attack as a Dragonblood Warrior. Just a swipe from Wharton's draconic tail would be enough to deeply wound Blumer.

Blumer now fully understood that in fighting Wharton, he could not allow himself to be struck. Just the tip of the draconic tail had struck his chest, but he had already been wounded. If it had been a full blow, he probably wouldn't have been wounded so lightly.

"Boom!"

With monstrous force, Wharton kicked off from the ground, which trembled despite the protective magical barriers on it. Transforming into a cruel blur, in the blink of an eye Wharton crossed the hundred meters distance between the two of them as he charged at Blumer.

"Haaaargh!"

Carrying immense force, Slaughterer came crashing down on him. Without hesitating in the slightest, Blumer immediately dodged. At the same moment as when he attacked with the warblade, Wharton spun around and kicked out with both legs viciously at Blumer.

Blumer didn't dare to block at all, only continuing to retreat at high speed.

"Whap!" But despite his high speed of retreat, that lightning-fast draconic tail snapped towards him once again, and Blumer hurriedly raised Icedream to block.

"Bam!" Despite striking against Icedream, the powerful force of the blow still sent Blumer flying far away towards the spectator stands of the Colosseum. The people standing near the spectator stands quickly scattered as Blumer viciously slammed down.

"Bam!" The stone spectator stands split apart, sending rubble flying everywhere and covering the area with dust.

All the viewers sucked in a cold breath. Dragonblood Warriors were simply too powerful. Because of their terrifyingly powerful draconic scales, their legs, arms, and tail could clash head on against weapons.

This was a major advantage.

"Aaaaargh!" With a wild howl, Blumer came flying out from the dust cloud. He didn't charge directly at Wharton; rather, he charged towards the other side of the dueling platform.

With just three massive leaps, Blumer arrived at the other side.

"Blumer, you will definitely lose." Wharton said coldly.

Blumer's body was covered in bloodstains, but he still stood ramrod straight. Blumer didn't look at Wharton, only at the longsword in his hand. "I originally wanted to defeat you using the sword technique that I personally developed. But it seems that I will have to use the sword technique which my older brother taught me."

"His older brother's sword technique?"

Haydson could clearly hear each word. "Olivier's Lightshadow Sword? I wonder how much of Olivier's technique he has mastered."

Linley frowned as well.

Olivier's sword technique?

"Remember, the technique which defeated you is the Lightshadow Sword!" Blumer's cold voice rang out. Suddenly, the Icedream sword in Blumer's hand became covered with a layer of golden light.

"Rumble..."

The strange thing was, standing on the dueling platform, Blumer suddenly split into two people, along with the sword in his hands. But then, those two shadows split once more...

One became two. Two became four. Four became eight.

This sight was simply too queer.

"What astonishing speed." Given his current level of enlightenment, Linley could tell that this Blumer was relying on an astonishing level of speed to reach this effect.

"This speed is actually slightly faster than my fastest speed in human form." Linley was secretly startled.

Wharton kept a careful, solemn guard. He felt as though he were surrounded by Blumer's shadows. Blumer was very fast, far faster than him. Even faster than his big brother Linley's human form.

"You will lose for sure."

The ice cold voice seemed to ring out simultaneously from all of those human shadows. Just as Wharton tightened his guard even further, those illusionary shadows suddenly blurred as Blumer appeared in front of him.

“Slash!”

Wharton simply didn’t have time to use his warblade to block, and so he could only raise his arm, relying on it to block this blow.

“Clang!” The sound of metal ringing on metal could be heard. Icedream only left a white line on Wharton’s scales, but at the same time, Wharton’s draconic tail...

“Swish!”

The draconic tail came smashing over...but Blumer disappeared yet again.

Having failed with this attack, he had immediately retreated.

“What is going on?” Wharton was shocked. “How did he suddenly appear in front of me just now?”

But Linley had seen everything clearly and understood. “Using the illusionary effects of this Lightshadow technique, he can draw near without his opponents noticing, and then using his astonishing speed, appear in front of his opponent before the opponent has a chance to react.”

Linley was able to use his understanding of the wind to easily determine where his opponent was, as a way to overcome this technique.

Wharton, however, didn’t have much attunement to the wind.

“Why are there so many shadows.” The 80,000 onlookers were stunned. They saw that on the dueling platform, sixteen shadow-Blumers had appeared. As a piercing golden light flashed, one of Blumer’s shadow-bodies appeared in a different location.

The total number of shadows remained sixteen in number.

Whenever one shadow disappeared, another shadow would appear in a different location. Every single time there was a change, there was a flash of golden light.

Bizarre.

Wharton watched carefully. As another golden light flashed, Wharton’s vision was dazzled, but right at this moment, Blumer’s longsword appeared in front of him. Blumer didn’t aim this attack at any other location, only at Wharton’s eyes.

That flashing golden sword had already appeared in front of Wharton’s eyes.

Chapter 7

“Bam!” A draconic-scale-covered left hand suddenly swung up and tightly gripped the Icedream sword in Blumer’s hand. Despite his attack power, Blumer was still unable to make Icedream pierce forward by even an inch. The palm of Wharton’s left hand was tightly pressed against the tip of Icedream’s blade.

The look on Blumer’s face changed.

Flee!

Drawing his sword back with a powerful pull, Blumer quickly fell backwards, pressing his back nearly against the dueling platform while hurriedly scuttling backwards. Right at this moment, Wharton’s draconic tail smashed towards Blumer.

If Blumer hadn’t pressed his body down to the ground, he definitely would have been struck.

“Whew.” Blumer stood once more at the edge of the dueling platform, panting slightly. That had been too close; he had almost been struck by Wharton’s draconic tail.

Blumer’s head hurt. Wharton’s defense was simply too powerful. His attacks couldn’t break that defense at all.

“Is that technique my only option?” Blumer only had a superficial understanding of the ‘Lightshadow Sword’ technique, but according to what Olivier had taught him, he could still utilize the most powerful attack of the Lightshadow Sword.

.....

Everyone in the Colosseum was holding their breaths. These experts simply fought at too high a speed, making it impossible for most people to see clearly what was going on. They only saw that Blumer seemed to have transformed into sixteen shadows, moving about as though he was teleporting.

But Wharton was like a sturdy castle. No matter how Blumer attacked, he was unable to hurt Wharton.

“If you won’t attack me, then it’s my turn to attack you.” Wharton’s voice rang out in the Colosseum, and then Wharton charged wildly towards Blumer.

Blumer immediately prepared to dodge.

But Wharton's seemingly light, agile blow from his warblade had reached a bizarre speed, and was chopping directly at Blumer's skull. Blumer quickly fell backwards while kicking off against the ground.

"Whoosh!" Blumer retreated backwards at high speed.

Although his retreat was very fast, Wharton's Slaughterer was even faster. Just as it was about to reach Blumer's vital chest area, Blumer immediately split his legs open and rolled to the back.

"Bam!" The Slaughter just scraped Blumer on the back, slamming against the ground.

Slaughterer – Single Stroke Execution!

"Boom!" The entire dueling platform began to tremble, and the magical formation on the dueling platform actually split apart as massive cracks appeared on the platform. This caused all of the 80,000 viewers to feel both shock and fear.

The defense of this dueling platform was incredibly strong, but the magical array had actually been destroyed nonetheless?

Blumer somersaulted in mid-air, then landed at the edges of the dueling platform. The audience near him couldn't help but begin to cry out in shock and fear.

Blumer roared angrily, a fierce look on his face.

With a fierce kick against the dueling platform, Wharton flew into the air at high speed towards Blumer's direction as the platform beneath him cracked yet again. Blumer once again dodged.

"Ahhh!" Seeing Wharton charge towards them, all the onlookers up above began to scream in fear.

But despite moving at high speed, Wharton only lightly balanced against the wall, then changed direction, continuing to pursue after Blumer.

Blumer retreated back to the top of the dueling platform, his face now completely red as his body emanated a red light. His face then turned a golden color, although his eyes remained red.

"What is Blumer doing?" Linley frowned.

Wharton, showing no fear, brandished the warblade 'Slaughterer' and charged directly at Blumer for close quarters combat.

Right now, many of the viewers began to cheer for Wharton, while others cursed at Blumer. Clearly, Blumer's repeated dodges had roused the anger of the crowd. Relying on greater speed to run and hide; what was that? Why not just admit defeat?

Blumer stared coldly at the charging Wharton, a hint of madness in his bloodshot eyes.

The golden aura covering Icedream suddenly carried a hint of white light in it. From a distance, Linley could clearly tell that the sword's aura had grown more powerful.

"Rumble..."

Repeating his old tactic, Blumer's body once more separated into multiple images. As flashes of golden-white light appeared, so too did more and more shadow-Blumers.

"Blumer, can't you do anything besides just run?" Wharton stood there. "If you have any ability, come and play."

Wharton knew that in speed, he was inferior to Blumer.

"As you wish, Wharton!" A gnashing, wrathful voice could be heard as a dazzling golden light flashed, and a longsword appeared in front of Wharton.

Wharton was shocked.

In terms of speed, this time it was even faster than last time.

"Haaargh!" Wharton once more wanted to use his left hand to grab at Icedream and rely on the toughness of the scales around his palm to block the tip, but this time...

"Slash!"

Covered with that golden-white aura, Icedream actually pierced straight through Wharton's palm and then, with astonishing speed, stabbed into Wharton's scale-armored chest.

And then, still covered in that bizarre golden-white light, Icedream once more split open Wharton's scales.

Although it took time to describe it, the actual event happened in the blink of an eye. Icedream pierced through both Wharton's palm and into his chest, and Wharton had actually reacted very quickly as well.

"Fuck off!" Wharton's right leg kicked viciously against Blumer.

Blumer, forewarned, had immediately begun to withdraw his sword. Piercing through the opponent was difficult, but pulling the sword out was much easier. Blumer dodged Wharton's kick, but he wasn't able to dodge the slap from Wharton's draconic tail...

Wharton had actually launched consecutive attacks with his tail and leg.

"Whap!" That draconic tail came swinging towards him. Unable to dodge it, Blumer could only use his left arm to block, while at the same time, allowing the momentum of the force to carry him backwards.

"Bam!"

The battle-qi protecting Blumer's left arm immediately split open, and the tip of the draconic tail actually slammed into Blumer's chest, knocking Blumer spinning through the air.

Wharton fell to the ground paralyzed, blood pouring from the wound in his chest.

"Big lunk!"

Nina called out in shock.

Wharton's injury was very severe. This sword blow from Blumer had pierced into his vitals and damaged his internal organs. Even coughing wracked Wharton's body with immense pain.

Blumer flipped up from his fallen position on the ground.

His left arm was broken, but he was still battle-worthy. But right now, Wharton could no longer move. If he were to try to do so, his severe injury would only grow more severe, to the point where he might even lose his life.

"Haha..."

Blumer laughed coldly. By this point, it could be said that Blumer was the victor, but Blumer actually moved at high speed towards Wharton, the Icedream sword in his hands stabbing mercilessly towards Wharton.

Just as Blumer moved, another human figure suddenly moved as well.

"Fuck off!" An angry roar could be heard. The 80,000 viewers only saw a sudden hurricane wind appear out of nowhere, and then countless flashes of violet light simultaneously struck against Blumer.

Blumer immediately hurriedly roused the battle-qi in his body to form a protective armor.

He didn't dare to take the blow head on. Borrowing the momentum force from those blows, he hurriedly retreated, letting himself be blasted backwards. But despite that, he still suffered several dozen sword wounds.

Blood flowed everywhere.

Fortunately, he retreated at high speed. If he had dared to resist the blow for even a second, Linley's sword would have run him through. The only things he had suffered so far were superficial wounds.

"Wharton, are you okay?" Linley couldn't be bothered with Blumer as he immediately inspected Wharton's injury.

"I...am fine." Wharton shook his head.

Linley's face changed. The chest was a vital area. A serious blow there could be life threatening. That Blumer could already be considered to have achieved victory, but he still had wanted to kill Wharton.

"This gentleman with the violet sword, please depart. Others cannot interfere in the duel between these two." A cold voice rang out. The speaker was one of the judges, Mr. Kenyon.

Linley turned to stare at him.

Couldn't he tell that Wharton had already been defeated?

"I represent my younger brother in admitting defeat." Linley said coldly. If they lost a duel, then they lost it. To Linley, this wasn't nearly as important as Wharton's life.

It was normal for an expert to lose a duel at times. As long as they could learn from their losses, they would be able to slowly improve.

"Impossible." Kenyon said calmly. "Per the rules of the competition, unless one of the duelists personally admits defeat, the duel must continue to its conclusion. Since Wharton has not yet admitted defeat, the duel has not finished."

Blumer rose to his feet as well.

Although he looked as though he had been badly injured, Linley's sword hadn't injured him at his vital points. He still could do battle.

"You are Wharton's older brother? Nonetheless, I still ask that you depart. Wharton and I will continue our competition." Blumer said directly.

Wharton's chest was deeply injured, and he could only speak in a tiny voice. If he used too much force to speak, his wound would worsen as well. Wharton opened his mouth, forcing himself to say loudly, "I...I..."

Watching beads of sweat form on his little brother's forehead as he struggled, Linley's heart clenched in pain. "Wharton, don't speak. Don't speak." Linley stopped his little brother from speaking.

"Sir, please leave the dueling platform." The judge, Kenyon, spoke again in a loud voice.

"You shut your motherfucking mouth!!!" Filled with rage, Linley roared at him loudly.

The entire Colosseum grew silent. Even the judge, Kenyon, was stunned. He...he had just been cursed at?!

He, a stately personal disciple of the War God, a Saint-level expert, had just been cursed!?

In the Colosseum, in front of 80,000 viewers, he had been cursed!!!

Kenyon immediately erupted with fury.

"Whoosh!" Kenyon immediately flew out of the judge's stand towards the dueling platform, staring at Linley coldly. "What type of thing are you, that you dare speak to your betters in such a way?"

Kenyon was both a Saint-level expert and the personal disciple of the War God. Who would dare be disrespectful to him?

Even the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, was very polite towards him. But today, in front of all these people, he had actually been cursed out by this person who came from gods-knew-where.

"Barker, take Wharton away first." Linley glanced coldly at Kenyon.

Barker and his brothers immediately rushed towards the dueling platform.

"Boom!" "Boom!" "Boom!" Barker and his brothers landed on the platform with those long-handled greataxes on their backs, and the weight of those 5000+ pound greataxes caused the earth to shudder.

All the onlookers had gone completely silent.

Barker and his brothers very carefully lifted Wharton up, taking him down from the platform. As they did, however, Barker and the others glared viciously at Kenyon.

“Fuck, who the fuck does he think he is?” Gates even cursed at him in a low growl.

Kenyon couldn’t help but stare angrily at Gates...but just at this moment, Linley’s body began to undergo an astonishing transformation. Black draconic scales sprouted forth from his body, and his forehead, back, elbows, and knees all became covered with sharp spikes. A black draconic tail began to wave about behind him.

“Ah!” The on-looking audience members cried out in shock.

“He is a Dragonblood Warrior as well?” Seeing this, Haydson was shocked as well. Linley’s Dragonform was much more ferocious-looking than Wharton’s, in particular that line of spikes running up his spine.

Raising his head, Linley stared at Kenyon with those utterly remorseless dark golden eyes.

Today, Linley’s heart was filled with boundless fury. An expert such as Kenyon should have easily been able to tell the sort of condition his little brother was in. His little brother had already lost, and so Emperor Johann and Haydson hadn’t spoken out or tried to stop Linley. But Kenyon had tried to stop him. Clearly, he was biased in favor of his fellow apprentice, Blumer.

Kenyon began to grow wary.

He discovered...

The person in front of him was a threat.

“Dragonblood Warrior?” Kenyon said in a solemn voice, floating in mid-air.

Linley actually rose into the air as well, rising to the same height as Kenyon as he stared coldly at him. Seeing Linley float in the air, everyone in the Colosseum exploded with excitement.

Good heavens! Yet another Saint-level combatant!

Was this going to be a battle between two Saint-level combatants? This was simply too exciting!

Two Saint-level experts stood in mid-air, staring at each other!

"I already told you that my younger brother admitted defeat. But you...still wanted my younger brother to continue." Linley's voice was utterly cold, seeming to come from the underworld.

"My fellow apprentice only wanted your younger brother to personally admit defeat. He didn't actually want your younger brother to continue. Your younger brother could've admitted defeat, but he refused to. Whose fault is that?" Blumer equivocated.

"Roll the fuck away."

Linley let out an angry shout as he suddenly moved. How could Kenyon watch Linley act without stopping him? He immediately drew a gold-black dual-color staff and he smashed it towards Linley.

"Fuck off!"

Linley's entire body seemed to have transformed into the sun, as countless violet sword-shadows blasted out in every direction. In the blink of an eye, ten million sword-shadows stabbed towards Kenyon.

Profound Truths of the Wind – Rippling Wind!

Kenyon was completely unable to block. In the blink of an eye, the layer of protective battle-qi over his body exploded with a 'BAM!'. Facing certain death, Kenyon retreated backwards at high speed in terror, but despite that, he was still stabbed several times by Bloodviolet.

Kenyon landed at the edge of the dueling platform, his long robes totally soaked with blood. He looked absolutely pathetic.

Kenyon stared at Linley in shock and terror.

They were on totally different levels. Linley definitely had the power of a peak-stage Saint-level expert!

A majestic personal disciple of the War God, a Saint-level expert...had been reduced to such dire straits by a single attack.

"Blumer!" When Linley turned to look at Blumer, he saw that Blumer, sensing that things were going terribly wrong, had immediately fled from the platform, heading towards the position of the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson.

The only person standing above the platform was Linley, who looked like a vicious demon who had descended from another plane of existence. That devilish Bloodviolet flexible sword was still dripping with blood.

The Colosseum. 80,000 viewers. Utter, deathly silence!

Chapter 8

With a single stroke, Linley had defeated a Saint-level expert who was the personal disciple of the War God. In addition, Linley's current transformation was into a terrifying form. This deeply shocked everyone present. None of the 80,000 viewers actually dared make a single sound.

Deathly silence. Terrifying silence!

Blumer stared terrified at Linley, still hovering in mid-air. At this moment, Linley's cold, remorseless dark golden eyes were fixed upon him. Blumer felt as though he could die at any moment. This utmost sensation of terror caused him to run even closer towards the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson.

Silence. No one dared to speak.

"Drip!" A single drop of bright red blood dripped down from the tip of Bloodviolet, landing on the dueling platform and splattering on it. In the silence, that clear sound rang out loudly.

This was the blood of Kenyon.

Kenyon was standing at the edge of the dueling platform, in miserable shape. Controlling his muscles and battle-qi, he sealed his wound and stopped the flow of blood. But he didn't dare fight against Linley again.

He was a Saint-level, true. But he was 'only' a mid-stage Saint-level. In terms of their comparative levels of enlightenment, he was far lower than Linley.

"Master Linley." Johann finally spoke. His voice echoed in the Colosseum, seeming to come out of nowhere, causing more than half the people to turn to him. His face still covered in smiles, Emperor Johann said, "Although I knew you were a powerful warrior, I had no idea that your talent in this field was not one whit inferior to your talent in stone sculpting."

Emperor Johann's words visibly eased the tension.

Just then, Linley's vicious demeanor had caused those 80,000 onlookers to not even dare breathe loudly. But as soon as Emperor Johann finished speaking, the entire Colosseum became filled with the sound of countless conversations.

"Master Linley? Ah! Could it be that he is that youngest-ever grandmaster sculptor?"

"Master Linley belongs to the Holy Union. I heard that Count Wharton had originally come from the Holy Union as well. Dragonblood Warriors truly are formidable!"

"Master Linley is so young! When he was sixteen, he created 'Awakening From the Dream', and only eleven years have passed since then. A twenty seven year old Saint-level combatant. Doesn't that make him even more incredible than Lord Olivier?"

.....

Countless conversations regarding Linley could be heard. Linley had appeared out of nowhere. His status as a master sculptor was well known to many aficionados of stone sculptures.

This was an individual who was almost on the same level as Master Proulx.

And now, this young master sculptor, only twenty seven years old, had defeated in a single blow a Saint-level expert who was a personal disciple of the War God!

Unavoidably, many people began to compare him and Olivier.

Compared to Olivier, Linley was even younger.

"My young friend Linley, that technique you used just now should have been derived from your insight into the Laws of the Wind, yes?" The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, spoke, his voice ringing from the judge's platform.

As soon as Haydson spoke, everyone else in the Colosseum fell silent. What did the Monolithic Sword Saint wish to discuss with this genius, Linley?

"It was indeed, Mr. Haydson." A calm reply from Linley.

"Might I ask what the name of this technique is?" The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, was a man devoted to his training and focused on reaching the Deity-level. Haydson was very much interested in the mysteries gleaned by other Saint-level experts. Perhaps by doing so, he might suddenly gain some new insights and have a breakthrough.

"The name of this technique is Rippling Wind." Linley didn't try to hide it.

In order to learn a powerful technique, one must possess a certain level of understanding and insight with regards to the Laws of a certain element. Without that level of understanding, no matter how clearly you explained a technique to someone, they wouldn't be able to learn it.

Still standing in mid-air, Linley glanced at the distant Kenyon. Calmly, he said, "Your name is Kenyon, correct?"

At first, Kenyon had thought Linley was someone who wasn't even at the Saint-level. Naturally, he was furious when Linley rebuked and cursed at him. But now, he knew that Linley was more powerful than he was.

Although he was still rather angry, in his heart, Kenyon already viewed Linley as someone on the same level as himself, or perhaps at an even higher level.

"I am." Kenyon nodded slightly.

"Mr. Kenyon, given your level of power, you should have been able to clearly discern the seriousness of my younger brother's injury. Given that you knew exactly how wounded he was, you shouldn't have said the words you said. Remember. As a judge, you have to be at least somewhat impartial. We had admitted defeat, after all. You can't go too far!"

As soon as Linley finished speaking these words coldly, he flew down towards his own squad. Linley was still concerned about his younger brother's injury.

Having been rebuked by Linley yet again, Kenyon felt rather embarrassed.

But he knew that he had acted wrongly here. Just then, the other side had admitted defeat. He did indeed go a bit too far by acting in such a manner.

.....

"Wharton, are you okay?" Linley said worriedly as he returned to his human form, rushing to his little brother's side and crouching on one knee.

Right now, quite a few people were surrounding him. Even Nina had ignored everything and rushed over.

"Lord Linley." A light-style magus next to them smiled. "Don't worry. I just utilized recovery magic on him. Lord Wharton's wounds are already half-healed. Given Lord

Wharton's natural healing abilities, in ten days or half a month, he should be totally fine."

"Big bro, I feel much better." Wharton was able to speak fairly easily now.

Linley finally calmed down.

At the same time, he felt rather satisfied with the preparations the Colosseum had made. Linley knew exactly how effective light-style magi were in treating wounds. Generally speaking, low-ranking magi would only be able to treat superficial wounds. Only powerful light-style magi would be able to heal broken bones or internal injuries.

And of course, the most powerful light-style magi could even totally restore to peak condition anyone who had not yet died. For example, when Linley had received the Divine Boon at the Radiant Temple, that divine power had carried just a bit of healing power with it, but that little bit had been enough to totally restore Linley's body to peak condition, healing all of his broken bones.

This sort of regenerative ability was very formidable.

"Everyone!"

At this moment, the tournament organizer, that silver-haired old man, reappeared on the dueling platform. His face covered in smiles, he said, "I imagine everyone has had an incredible time watching this battle today. Haha. Even our dueling platform has been destroyed as a result of this battle."

The 80,000 viewers stared at the shattered, crater-marked dueling platform, and they all began to laugh as well.

This duel today had absolutely been worth watching.

Not only had they seen a competition between two ultimate geniuses, they even had had a chance to see the terrifying power of Wharton's older brother, Linley. He had, in one blow, defeated Kenyon.

Although the exchange between Linley and Kenyon was very brief, the 'value' of watching that exchange was much higher than that of the battle between Wharton and Blumer. After all, this was a battle between Saint-levels. Many people would live their entire lives without having a chance to witness such a battle.

“And the results of today’s duel, I’m sure everyone will agree, are without question. I announce...” The silver-haired old man’s words came to a halt, as he stared at the air above him.

Not just him. The tens of thousands of people sitting on the side of the judge’s stand were all staring at a glowing line streaking at high speed through the air towards them.

In the blink of an eye, the streak of light arrived at the Colosseum.

“Saint-level!”

The Colosseum once again was filled with excited shouts. Yet another Saint-level expert had appeared.

This man wore simple, sackcloth clothes, and seemed very calm. But his eyes seemed to blaze with the light of the stars. His hair was black mixed with streaks of white, but judging from his face, one could tell without a doubt that this was not an old man; rather, this man was very young.

“Who is this person?”

“Don’t recognize’m. His hair is turning white. Which Saint-level expert is this?”

.....

The stands were filled with the sound of discussions being held. It seemed most people were surprisingly unable to recognize who this Saint-level was, that had just flown here. After all, many people had seen some of the more famous Saint-level experts.

The young man flew towards Blumer.

“Second brother, what happened?” The young man said.

“Big brother!” Blumer’s astonished, overjoyed voice rang out.

This exchange seemed to have lit a fire within the audience at the Colosseum. This youngster with white and black hair, dressed in a simple sackcloth attire, was the Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier!

“Olivier. Wait, that can’t be. Olivier’s hair should be brownish-black, and he likes wearing white clothes.”

“Olivier. He was such a marvel to behold. How did he become like this?”

"I can tell for certain that this is Olivier. Compared to how he looked when he last battled against Lord Dillon, his appearance is almost identical. Only, his hair looks different, and it seems his aura is different as well."

.....

Right. His aura was different.

No wonder those 80,000 viewers were unable to recognize him. In the past, Olivier's aura was astonishingly sharp, like a sword that had been unleashed from its scabbard. In addition, he wore a pure white robe.

His handsome face and his fierce aura had made Olivier famous throughout the imperial capital.

But the current Olivier had changed dramatically compared to before.

The current Olivier didn't have a fierce aura, and his hair, now part-white, seemed aged. Olivier had never used to dress in sackcloth before either.

"He is Olivier?" Linley looked at Olivier as well.

Yale nodded next to Linley. "Right. According to my clan's intelligence, in the years after he reached the Saint-level, Olivier had been roving about the various Empires and engaging in training. According to the predictions of our intelligence unit, he should have defeated many Saint-level experts."

Linley nodded slightly.

As soon as he had seen Olivier, Linley had the sense...that this Olivier person was an extremely terrifying expert. Compared to Stehle of the Radiant Church, he was even more formidable.

"Has he come for the purpose of doing battle on behalf of his little brother?" Linley immediately began to quietly chant the words to a magic spell.

Olivier was extremely famous. Given his reputation, Linley definitely wouldn't underestimate Olivier, nor did he dare to be insufficiently cautious.

A gust of wind suddenly swirled about Linley.

Wind-style spell of the ninth rank – Windshadow technique!

.....

Olivier finished listening to his younger brother's description of this battle. Blumer intentionally made the situation sound even worse. "Big brother, that Linley bullied me with his superior power. If it wasn't for the assistance of my elder fellow apprentice, I'm afraid..."

Olivier frowned.

The Akerlund clan was actually a very ordinary, common clan. Their parents had died early on, and Olivier had to rely on himself to protect Blumer and help raise Blumer.

Blumer was Olivier's only family member. The two brothers shared a very deep love for each other.

"Kenyon." Olivier glanced at the nearby Kenyon. "Thank you. I, Olivier, will definitely remember your benevolence in assisting us."

Kenyon hurriedly said, "Olivier, no need. Blumer is my younger fellow apprentice. I can't just sit and watch."

Olivier smiled at Kenyon, then stared coldly at his younger brother. He rebuked, "Second brother, I told you long ago, unless the situation is a matter of life or death, you are not to use that forbidden technique. Given your current level of understanding, you are far from being able to use it properly. Do you know how harmful that most powerful attack was to you? The damage it caused was more severe than that of your broken arm!"

Blumer lowered his head.

In order to defeat Wharton, in the end, he had utilized a forbidden technique, and the damage done to himself by this forbidden technique wasn't something which light-style magic could heal. When Olivier had taught him this technique, he had instructed him to only use it in a life-or-death situation.

"Elder brother. I am sorry." Blumer knew that Olivier was looking out for his interests.

Olivier shook his head and sighed, then turned to look at the distant Linley. A fierce look appeared in his eyes, previously as tranquil as the depths of the seas. Olivier flew directly over.

"Olivier, wait!" Knowing things were taking a turn for the worse, Emperor Johann immediately spoke out.

"Your Imperial Majesty, I will not spare someone who tried to kill my younger brother. Your Imperial Majesty, it's best if you don't get involved in this matter." Olivier didn't give Johann any face at all.

Emperor Johann didn't say anything else either. He understood Olivier's temperament very well.

But as far as Johann was concerned, both Linley and Olivier were important members of the Empire. He didn't want these two geniuses to battle each other.

Olivier hovered in mid-air, his long robes fluttering about him. His cold, fierce gaze was on Linley. "Linley, come out!" This explosive shout rocked the Colosseum like a thunderbolt, echoing nonstop within it.

"Come out!" "Come out!" "Come out!"

Everyone in the Colosseum held their breaths. Good heavens. The tickets they had bought were absolutely worth it. They had already seen two battles, but now, it seemed as though they were going to see an even more exciting one.

The 80,000 pairs of eyes in the Colosseum all swung towards Linley.

Chapter 9

"Linley, come out!"

Olivier's explosive shout still echoed in the Colosseum, but Linley seemed to be deaf to it. He remained on one knee besides his younger brother's side, discussing something with his younger brother, seemingly not having heard Olivier's shout at all.

Olivier, standing in mid-air, couldn't help but frown.

"What is Master Linley doing? Didn't he hear it?"

"Impossible. Maybe he is afraid of Olivier?"

.....

The people in the Colosseum were puzzled by Linley's lack of reaction. After letting out this angry shout, Olivier fell silent, staring coldly from mid-air at Linley.

After finishing his conversation with his little brother, Linley turned and glanced upwards at the mid-air Olivier. In that instant...

Their gazes met! One on the ground, the other mid-air.

Their gazes seemed to clash in the air like physical blows.

"Olivier." A hint of a smile was on Linley's face. He calmly said, "Ever since arriving in the O'Brien Empire, I've heard people praise you as the Prodigy Sword Saint. To tell the truth? Given that you reached the Saint-level at age forty, I don't see what makes you a 'prodigy'."

Olivier's forehead furrowed slightly.

The combative nature of Linley's words caused all 80,000 onlookers to grow excited. Good heavens. These two geniuses were really being antagonistic towards each other.

This would be the true duel between geniuses.

A duel between Linley and Olivier would clearly be on a totally different level from the duel between Blumer and Wharton. The battle between the older brothers definitely would be a duel between two of the utmost geniuses in the entire Yulan continent.

This duel was about to start at any moment.

Linley suddenly rose directly into the air above the dueling platform. Only after he came to a stop did the blur beneath him slowly disappear.

What terrifying speed.

"Rumble..." Black draconic scales quickly covered Linley's entire body, and ferocious spikes erupted from his spine, his knees, his elbows, and his forehead. That black, scale-covered draconic tail flashed with a cold, gloomy light.

Floating in the air, Linley stared at Olivier with those dark golden eyes.

This was the first time he had seen such a terrifying transformation. Even the normally calm and composed Olivier had a flash of surprise in his eyes, but he quickly returned to his usual calm.

"Saint-level Dragonblood Warrior?" Olivier looked at Linley, a terrifying aura of battle-lust emanating from him. "You aren't at the Saint-level pre-transformation. It

seems that your current condition isn't the most powerful condition and time for a Dragonblood Warrior. Pity...such a pity..."

Olivier truly wanted to have a battle with one of the legendary peak-stage Saint-level Dragonblood Warriors.

"Olivier, a person should know their limits." Linley's cold voice rang out in the Colosseum. "Do you think the likes of you are a match for the Supreme Warriors?"

The two genius Saint-levels stared at each other in mid-air. Everyone held their breaths, carefully watching this never-before-seen battle.

"Linley!"

Olivier extended his hand to his back. On Olivier's back, there were two longswords; one of them, a translucent sword, appeared very similar to Icedream. The other sword was pitch black.

"Against you, using the Lightshadow Sword technique is enough." Olivier drew the longsword that was as translucent as a block of ice. This sword really was identical to Blumer's; it was also an 'Icedream sword'.

With a flip of his hand, that devilish-looking Bloodviolet flexible sword appeared.

"Enough talk. Power is demonstrated through actions, not words." Linley paid no attention to Olivier's arrogance at all.

A hint of self-confidence was in Olivier's eyes. Staring at the Icedream sword in his hands, he murmured, "After I reached the Saint-level and defeated Dillon, I have roamed the various countries. In total, I met eighteen Saint-level experts, and won each battle. Unfortunately, not a single one of them was able to match me in speed."

A series of surprised murmurs from the 80,000 onlookers.

No one had known that Olivier had subsequently done battle against eighteen Saint-level experts.

Olivier looked at Linley, a hint of self-confidence in his eyes. "In general, someone who cannot match me in speed will definitely lose." As he spoke, the Icedream sword in Olivier's hand began to shine as a white light began to swirl about the surface of the sword.

Seeing this, Linley began to grow cautious.

Linley could remember clearly how when Blumer used this Lightshadow Sword technique, the light on the Icedream sword had been golden. Only afterwards, when Blumer had used the 'forbidden' technique, did Icedream carry a hint of white light within it.

Although it was just a hint of white light, the attack power of Icedream had multiplied several dozen times.

Originally, Icedream had not been able to harm Wharton, but afterwards, it had been able to pierce through Wharton's palm, and then pierce past the scales on Wharton's chest. And that was just a hint of white light.

But Olivier's? It was pure white.

"The power of this attack is most likely far more powerful than Blumer's all-out desperation attack." Linley naturally was prepared for this.

"Linley, I'm afraid that today, the world will have lost another genius." Olivier said in a quiet, calm voice, and then the white light began to flash repeatedly.

With each flash of white light, another shadow-Olivier appeared in the air above the dueling platform. The power and efficacy of this white light clearly was much higher than Blumer's technique; in the blink of an eye, 108 shadow-Oliviers had appeared in the sky.

Everyone was shocked speechless.

"Third bro." Yale and Reynolds were so nervous that they had begun to sweat already. Wharton, Barker and his brothers, Rebecca, Leena, and Jenne also watched nervously as well.

The injured Blumer, by contrast, watched with confidence.

"Blumer, your older brother's Lightshadow sword has already reached the perfected level, filling the skies with his shadows." The seated judge, Monolithic Sword Saint Haydson, smiled calmly at Blumer.

Blumer's face was filled with confidence.

.....

The demonically ferocious-looking Linley, standing in mid-air, was now surrounded by 108 shadow-Oliviers. Linley had to admit that this speed was absolutely astonishing.

“Linley, are you ready?” Olivier actually gave Linley a warning.

Clearly, Olivier was feeling extremely confident.

Linley only chuckled calmly.

A sudden white flash, utterly piercing to the eye. Even Linley had to squint, but right at that moment, the Icedream sword, covered with white light, reached Linley’s head, piercing directly through it.

“Ah!”

Everyone let out simultaneous cries of alarm. Did the mighty Linley die just like that?

But not a hint of blood came out from Linley’s head, despite having been pierced through by Icedream. Suddenly, ‘Linley’ slowly disappeared. It had just been a shadow!

“You are indeed quite fast. Unfortunately, in front of me, you aren’t qualified to be arrogant about it!” Linley’s voice rang out from the air a hundred meters away.

Olivier stared at the distant Linley, his face growing solemn.

“How incredibly fast!” The eyes of the Monolithic Sword Saint Haydson, watching from the judge’s platform, shone brightly. Linley’s speed wasn’t one whit inferior to Olivier’s.

A wave of surprised murmurs filled the Colosseum. And then, silence once again.

The viewers all felt as though their very souls had been shocked by this exciting battle.

“Is that so?” Olivier’s face grew cold. He had never met anyone faster than him. As for someone on par with his speed, the only one to date had been the Monolithic Sword Saint. He didn’t believe this youngster Linley could match him.

After all, his speed was so fast that it had already exceeded human limits.

This sword technique and movement technique was based on Olivier’s insights into the Elemental Laws of Light. This movement technique, in principle, could reach the speed of light itself. However, due to the limits of his body and his battle-qi, he could only reach his current level of speed.

“You don’t believe me?” Linley chuckled.

Another flash of white light. Linley began to move as well, as both reached a terrifying level of speed.

Shadowed blurs everywhere!

Countless shadows and blurs appeared everywhere. The 80,000 watchers felt their vision grow blurry. They simply couldn't tell which of the shadows were the true bodies of Linley and Olivier. The two had simply reached an absolutely terrifying level of speed.

"What astonishing speed." As they really began to compete, Linley couldn't help but feel surprised. "If it wasn't for the fact that I had cast the Windshadow spell in advance, I wouldn't be able to match this Olivier in speed."

Linley was fast, true.

But the insights which Olivier had gained into the Elemental Laws of Light were extremely powerful. However, supported by the most powerful speed-enhancing spell, the Windshadow spell, Linley's speed had been instantly raised to a level equivalent to Olivier's.

"Swish!"

A deep gouge suddenly appeared on the dueling platform; clearly, it had been cut by a longsword. But then in the blink of an eye, a huge crater appeared with a thundering sound.

The 80,000 viewers stared fixedly with wide eyes, not wanting to miss a thing.

"Motherfucker, this is real speed. Our Academy's teacher keeps on bragging, but compared with these guys? He's just a child who has barely learned to walk." Watching this battle, a youngster was so excited that his eyes were turning bloodshot.

These 80,000 viewers had perhaps never seen this sort of high-speed battle before in their entire lives.

This sort of battle would only occur when the two combatants were equally matched in speed. If one of them was too slow, the battle would have ended instantly.

"Bam!"

Linley's black draconic tail brushed past Olivier's clothes, viciously smashing against the dueling platform, causing every single inch of the platform to crack. In the next instant, Linley and Olivier both disappeared.

The battle was so high speed that the onlookers could only barely see some shadows and blurs when the two lowered their speeds to exchange blows. But once the combatants returned to their maximum speed, not even their shadows could be seen!

"Whoosh!"

A tornado seemed to have sprung into being out of nowhere in the middle of the Colosseum. As the wind howled, the 80,000 onlookers could just barely make out two hazy figures standing in the middle of the wind, staring at each other.

The fierce wind gradually died down.

Olivier looked solemnly at Linley, the Icedream sword in his hands gleaming with all seven colors of the rainbow, like a beautiful illusion.

As for the demonic Linley, his draconic tail quivered behind him, and the Bloodviolet sword in his hand was covered with a strange violet light.

A suppressive aura filled the Colosseum.

"I admit that your speed is no lower than mine." Olivier spoke out.

Linley's dark golden eyes were fixed on his opponent. He said calmly, "And your speed isn't any lower than mine either." After having competed just then, these two experts found that neither could gain an advantage over the other based on speed.

If they continued to compete in such a manner, there would be no end.

"Dare you face my attacks head on?" Olivier stared Linley, a surge of an aura of battle-lust erupting forth from him.

"Why wouldn't I dare?" Linley's body began to emit that same ferocious battle-lust.

The 80,000 onlookers were so excited that they were beginning to quiver. Good heavens. These two experts were going to fight head on now. Even the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, was watching carefully.

As for Blumer, Wharton, and the others, they were each eager to see their older brother achieve victory.

Linley and Olivier stared at each other in mid air. In the same instant, the two of them moved in a direct line towards the other.

“Bang!” Sudden sonic booms erupted from them as they reached a terrifying level of speed.

While charging at Linley, Olivier’s body seemed to have fragmented into seven or eight people, and the Icedream sword in his hands had transformed into ten million sword-shadows.

“You want to compete in sword speed?”

The Bloodviolet sword in Linley’s hand flickered, then in the blink of an eye, Linley’s body seemed to have been surrounded by a tornado while at the same time, countless flashes of violet light simultaneously struck at Olivier.

“Clang!” “Clang!” “Clang!” “Clang!”

Countless clashing sounds could be heard, and then, Linley’s iron-whip-like draconic tail turned into a blur as well, smashing viciously against Olivier.

“Clang.” The Icedream sword in Olivier’s hand slammed against Linley’s draconic tail, then he flew backwards at high speed.

Chapter 10

Olivier immediately flew backwards to the viewing platform, staring at Linley with a hint of surprise in his eyes.

But then, Olivier began to laugh loudly. “Great, great, great! The speed of your sword attacks actually can match my ‘Phantom Dream Sword’ technique.”

“You aren’t bad either. You were actually able to block my ‘Rippling Wind’ technique.” Linley’s cold voice rang out.

Profound Truths of the Wind – Rippling Wind.

Lightshadow Sword – Phantom Dream Sword.

The strength of these two techniques were equal.

After praising their opponents, the two geniuses fell silent, carefully watching the other. Clearly, this exchange had resulted in both men viewing the other as equals.

The tension in the Colosseum was so thick, it could be sliced with a knife. The terrifying, repressive aura caused the 80,000 viewers to feel as though they didn't even dare to breathe.

"If you can receive this next attack of mine, I can spare your life." A hint of appreciation towards Linley could be seen in Olivier's eyes. "By receiving this next attack, you'll be demonstrating that you are qualified to be considered a rival of mine."

As soon as he said these words, Barker and the others actually began to curse.

"Fuck his grandmother, this Olivier wasn't able to show any superiority over Lord Linley at all, and he actually dares say something like... 'by receiving this next attack, you'll be qualified to be my rival'? What sort of bullshit is this?" Gates cursed loudly.

Barker and the other brothers were muttering unhappily as well.

Indeed, these words from Olivier made many of the people watching this battle unhappy. They had clearly seen how Olivier hadn't been able to seize any advantage. How could he say such a thing? This was simply too arrogant.

"Rival?" Linley laughed calmly. "If you can take this next sword of mine, you'll be qualified to be my rival as well."

The two said the exact same things to each other.

"Haha... then have a taste of the power of my 'Sword of the Aurora'!" Olivier laughed loudly. And then, he flew once more at high speed directly towards Linley.

Linley laughed coldly.

Linley, too, began to prepare the second stage of the Profound Truths of the Wind – Tempos of the Wind. This was a single-target sword attack, relying on ultimate speed and power.

"BOOM!" Sonic booms erupted.

Linley's ferocious draconic tail swaying behind him, Linley transformed into a blur as he also charged straight forward, the Bloodviolet sword in his hands transforming into a brilliant violet light.

The brilliant white aura covering Olivier's Icedream sword suddenly expanded dramatically, transforming Icedream and making it as dazzling as the sun itself.

The piercing white light forced everyone watching the battle to unconsciously narrow their eyes.

The most powerful attack of the Lightshadow Sword technique – Sword of the Aurora!

The most powerful attack of Linley's Profound Truths of the Wind – Tempos of the Wind!

That devilish violet light moved as fast and as ferociously as a bolt of lightning, but at the same time it carried with it the gentleness of the spring wind. These totally opposite auras were manifested at the same time with this attack.

That sort of strange tempo caused many people to feel a strange fear in their hearts.

"What a powerful sword attack!" The eyes of Monolithic Sword Saint Haydson lit up. He could totally sense how powerful this attack by Linley was.

This sort of strange, uniquely intersecting tempo caused a natural wind-edge to form on the surface of Linley's Bloodviolet sword. Or, to put it more accurately, it was a spatial edge.

The devilish violet light. The piercing white light. They intersected in the middle of the air above the Colosseum.

"Boom!" The terrifying force of the collision blasted out in every direction. The dueling platform below was slashed open by countless invisible blades, with many gouges appearing in its surface. At the same time, a frighteningly powerful wave of force emanated in each direction, causing the 80,000 viewers to sway and stumble.

"Crunch!" Some of the cups located near the edges of the dueling platform were actually shattered by the force of the wind.

Those onlookers held on for dear life against their stone seats as their bodies swayed. Only after that wild blast of wind left did the Colosseum slowly return to its normal calm. But to the shock of many of the watchers, many of their outer layer of clothes had been blown off of them by the wind.

What terrifying force.

Everyone stared in astonishment at the two experts in mid-air. At this time, Olivier and Linley were silently staring at each other in mid-air.

Tempos of the Wind. Sword of the Aurora.

Once again, they were equally matched.

Olivier stared at Linley, his gaze slowly brightening. A hint of a smile actually appeared on Olivier's face. "Linley, what was the name of that sword technique you just used?"

Linley didn't try to dissemble. "Profound Truths of the Wind, second stage – Tempos of the Wind."

"Tempos of the Wind...Tempos of the Wind..." Thinking back to the attack Linley had just used, Olivier looked at Linley with eyes filled with approval. "Linley, I can hardly believe that you are a young grandmaster sculptor as well. To be so accomplished, but not yet be even thirty years old. I admire you."

Olivier's attitude towards Linley had totally changed.

"I previously said that if you could withstand this blow from me, I would spare your life. I will keep my word. From today onwards, your name has now been added to my list of rivals. I eagerly anticipate your growth and development." Olivier said with a smile.

Linley frowned.

This Olivier was simply too arrogant.

Barker and his brothers were standing below them. Gates, the most irascible of the lot, immediately jumped to his feet. "Fuck his grandmother! Olivier, you didn't beat our Lord. How dare you prattle on and swagger about like a bushy-tailed wolf! Fuck, I hate people like you."

This loud shout caused the countless onlookers to be unable to control their laughter.

It must be said that many people agreed with Gates' words.

The words which Olivier had just said were the words an elder expert would say to a junior. They had a lecturing aura to it. He had even said, 'I look forward to your growth' and 'I will spare your life'.

If Olivier had truly won, others would acknowledge these words as having bearing and composure.

But he hadn't won. Nobody could sense that Olivier had held even the slightest bit of advantage. If they continued fighting, it was hard to say who would win.

“Hrmph.” Olivier sneered coldly. His cold, gloomy eyes swept the surrounding area, and the Colosseum immediately fell silent.

Olivier looked at Linley. Calmly, he said, “Six years ago, you would indeed have been able to stalemate me. But now...”

“You just barely qualify for me to utilize the obsidian sword. But if I use it then today you, a genius, would definitely lose your life.” Olivier’s calm voice echoed in the Colosseum.

Only now did most people in the Colosseum remember...Olivier had two swords on his back. The Icedream sword was only one of them.

Obsidian sword?

“Obsidian sword? Olivier, you’ve truly mastered it?” At the judge’s stand, the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, spoke out, attracting the attention of everyone present.

From the looks of it, the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, had some sort of prior relationship with Olivier.

Olivier turned to look at the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson. In a calm voice, he said, “Mr. Haydson, thank you for the advice you gave me six years ago. It resulted in me gaining certain insights. Three years of battles, followed by three years of quiet meditation in the desolate mountains. I have now mastered the ‘obsidian sword’, which is even more powerful than the ‘Lightshadow’ technique.”

The Colosseum was filled with cries of astonishment.

“Even more powerful than the Lightshadow Sword technique? No wonder Lord Olivier said that he was sparing Master Linley’s life.”

“That year when he defeated Lord Dillon, Lord Olivier had used the Lightshadow Sword technique. Back then, Lord Olivier only had a single sword on his back, but now he has two. Ten years. He really has improved.”

Many people sighed in amazement at Olivier’s prowess. The power he had demonstrated just now wasn’t his true power. How terrifying was Olivier truly?

“My big brother, he...” Wharton knew that Linley was fighting for his sake, and now, he was beginning to worry for Linley.

Wharton was worried, but Barker and his brothers, on the contrary, weren't worried at all.

"Wharton, his Lordship hasn't revealed his true power yet." Barker laughed as he glanced at Wharton. "When his Lordship sparred with you, he only used the Bloodviolet flexible sword. He didn't dare test his true attack against you."

"Right. Linley has an even more terrifying adamantine heavy sword." Zassler said solemnly.

Having been with Linley for so long, Zassler and the Barker brothers knew exactly how terrifyingly powerful the adamantine heavy sword was. When Linley was only at the peak-stage of the ninth rank, his usage of the 'Hundred Layered Waves' technique with the adamantine heavy sword would have been irresistible by even Saint-level Undying Warriors despite them being known for their defense.

Even most mid-stage Saint-level experts would probably suffer a severe injury.

And now, Linley's base power and battle-qi were all at the Saint-level. If he were to once more utilize his 'Profound Truths of the Earth', most likely even peak-stage Saint-level experts wouldn't be able to take a blow from him.

After all, the vibrational attacks which Linley had developed based on his insights was simply too terrifying. Battle-qi and muscle power virtually did nothing to defend against it.

"Linley, I eagerly anticipate your future challenge." Olivier said with a calm laugh.

Olivier was also someone who pursued the peak of power. A good rival was hard to find. For Linley to be so powerful in his twenties meant that in the future, he would definitely be a good rival for Olivier.

"Lord Olivier really does have the bearing of an expert." Many people sighed in praise. But Blumer, located near the judge's stand, was unhappy. "Why can't elder brother simply just kill Linley and get it over with?"

The spikes protruding from Linley's head gleamed with a metallic light.

"Olivier." Linley's dark golden eyes stared at Olivier. "I told you long ago. A person should know their limits. Do you think your obsidian sword is very powerful?"

"Hrm?" Olivier's face changed as he looked at Linley. Linley didn't know what was good for him!

But Linley extended his hand. Suddenly, an astonishing azure-black heavy sword appeared in his palm.

“My most powerful weapon...the adamantine heavy sword.” Linley stared at Olivier. “Once I use the adamantine heavy sword, even I can’t fully control its power. I might kill you.”

Olivier started.

The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, was stunned as well. Blumer stared at the mid-air Linley in astonishment as well. The 80,000 viewers had all fallen silent.

In mid-air, the ferocious Dragonformed Linley wielded his adamantine heavy sword and stared coldly at Olivier. “From what you are saying, it sounds like your obsidian sword is very powerful. I want to see for myself if your obsidian sword is more powerful, or if my adamantine heavy sword is more powerful.”

“Adamantine heavy sword? Adamantine?” Olivier and Haydson were both secretly shocked.

The legendary material which supposedly even Deity-level experts would find difficult to break?

“Haha...good. Wonderful.” Olivier began to laugh loudly. “I take back my earlier words. I, too, want to see if your adamantine heavy sword is everything you claim it is. Linley, be careful. My obsidian sword might just claim your life.”

As he spoke, Olivier sheathed his Icedream sword, then slowly drew out his obsidian sword. The obsidian sword was the same size and shape as the Icedream sword, but its pitch-black surface looked very ordinary. However, when Olivier placed the obsidian sword in front of him, a layer of cold, dark light began to flow over its surface.

That black light seemed capable of devouring everything around it.

“The obsidian sword’s techniques were developed based on my insights into the Elemental Laws of Darkness.” Olivier stared coldly at Linley.

Linley wielded the adamantine heavy sword in his hands. Because it had been struck by heavenly lightning when it had been forged, the adamantine heavy sword’s surface gleamed with that azure light.

"The adamantine heavy sword's techniques were developed based on my insights into the Elemental Laws of the Earth." Linley's dark golden eyes were fixed upon the opponent as well.

One wielded an obsidian sword. The other wielded the adamantine heavy sword.

Two ultimate geniuses. 80,000 pairs of eyes in the Colosseum were focused on them. The entire Colosseum seemed to be holding its breath. Both Blumer and Wharton began to grow anxious and nervous.

Right now, no one knew who would win; Linley, or Olivier!

"Bang!" "Bang!"

Two terrifying sonic booms erupted, as the two people charged directly towards each other from hundreds of meters away. But just at this moment, the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, who had been seated at the judge's stand, suddenly disappeared from his seat. He took three steps in mid-air, moving as fast as lightning, suddenly interposing between the two.

"Stay your hands!"

An earth-colored ripple of power erupted forth from the body of the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, striking simultaneously against Linley and Olivier. Linley had the sensation of being struck by countless meteors, and his body was repelled backwards by several dozen meters. Olivier had also been knocked backwards in the same way.

Linley and Olivier both turned to stare at Haydson.

The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, laughed calmly as he looked at each of them. "Linley. Olivier. Both of you are incredible geniuses of the entire Yulan continent. You are both so young. Judging from your words, both the adamantine heavy sword technique and the obsidian sword technique are extremely vicious, dangerous sword techniques, which even you two are unable to fully control. If this battle were truly to continue, then one of you will definitely die, or perhaps even both of you. For two such geniuses to fall would be a huge loss to the entire Yulan continent. I suggest...that we bring this duel to a end for now."

Chapter 11

Stop fighting?

The 80,000 viewers all began to mumble in unison upon hearing these words from the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson. Some even began to quietly curse him.

Linley and Olivier were definitely two of the most brilliant men in the entirety of the Yulan continent. Many warriors would literally be willing to give up their lives if it meant they could see such a battle between two such genius Saint-level experts.

But just as the battle was getting to the most exciting part, the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, had popped out!

How could they not be angry?

But the person stopping the battle was Haydson, the number one Saint-level in the world!

"It's best if we have this battle come to an end here and now." Housekeeper Hiri's forehead was covered in sweat.

Not just Housekeeper Hiri. Hillman, Wharton, and the others were all worrying for Linley as well. Olivier's performance hadn't been one whit inferior to Linley's, and that obsidian sword technique seemed to be very strange as well.

Linley's 'Profound Truths of the Earth' was powerful, true.

But would the attack which Olivier had developed based on his understanding of the Elemental Laws of Darkness necessarily be any weaker than Linley's 'Profound Truths of the Earth'? Hadn't Olivier himself said that he was unable to control the power of the obsidian sword once unleashed?

Because the Monolithic Sword Saint Haydson had suddenly interrupted, Linley and Olivier were standing on opposite ends of the Colosseum in mid-air, staring at each other, with Haydson between them.

Three Saint-level experts. Two were ultimate geniuses, while the third was reputed to be the most powerful Saint-level expert in the world.

"Stop fighting?" Olivier glanced at Haydson.

Linley glanced at Haydson as well.

"This Haydson's power really is astonishing. That technique he displayed just now definitely wasn't just based on pure battle-qi. It should have been some sort of defensive technique developed through his mastery of the Laws of the Earth."

Linley could totally sense that the earth-colored wave Haydson had emitted earlier contained layers of wave-like energy.

“However, he wouldn’t necessarily be able to withstand my ‘Profound Truths of the Earth’.” Linley was still extremely confident in the power of his ultimate attack.

In truth, when charging against each other just now, both Linley and Olivier had both been in the charge-up phase.

At Linley and Olivier’s levels, as peak-stage Saint-level experts, they wouldn’t waste any energy at all. Both the ‘Profound Truths of the Earth’ as well as Olivier’s attack would wait until when the blows landed on the opponent before suddenly allowing their power to erupt!

Many of the victims of the ‘Profound Truths of the Earth’, when first struck by the adamantine heavy sword, initially hadn’t sensed any danger at all. But then suddenly...

They would sense layers upon layers of vibrational wave attacks transmitting into their internal organs.

Just then, Haydson had been able to push aside both Linley and Olivier with one technique, true. But that was because neither Linley nor Olivier had used their ultimate attacks against Haydson. Otherwise, it wouldn’t have been so easy for Haydson to block them.

“Haha, Olivier, Linley.” Emperor Johann stood up now. Under the gaze of 80,000 people, Emperor Johann walked off the judge’s platform and said in a loud voice, “Olivier, Linley, this battle between the two of you has already been an incredible sight, and expanded our horizons. What’s more, neither of you have a serious grudge against each other that can only be resolved in death.”

Emperor Johann didn’t wish for either Linley or Olivier to die.

If these two geniuses remained alive, then the O’Brien Empire’s influence in the Yulan continent would be even stronger.

Linley and Olivier glanced at each other.

“Fine.” Olivier nodded, laughing calmly. “When brother Linley had received my ‘Lightshadow Sword’ attack, I already had lost my desire to continue fighting. However, I was partially at fault in this affair as well...” Olivier looked at Linley.

“Brother Linley’s power exceeded my expectations. I didn’t expect that the sword techniques he revealed at the beginning were just the surface of his abilities.” Olivier revealed a smile towards Linley. “I admit, brother Linley’s power is no weaker than my own.”

Clearly, Olivier was indicating a willingness to be friendly towards Linley. He even addressed him as ‘brother Linley’.

The obsidian sword’s technique was extremely powerful, but Linley’s adamantine heavy sword technique was also extremely powerful. If these two geniuses really did insist on going all-out today and fight to the point of death, it really would be a waste and not worth it.

Since Olivier had already spoken in a conciliatory manner, Linley wouldn’t press things either.

After all, he had just entered the O’Brien Empire recently. It was best that he not create too many enemies.

“Then let’s have this battle come to an end.” Linley’s calm voice echoed in the Colosseum, and the 80,000 viewers understood that the battle between these two ultimate geniuses wouldn’t continue today.

But immediately afterwards...

An ear-splitting, thunderous applause filled the entire Colosseum. All of the watchers were cheering at the top of their lungs. Although the duel had come to an end, they were still uncontrollably excited.

“Olivier!” “Olivier!” “Olivier!”

“Linley!” “Linley!” “Linley!” “Linley!”

Those joyous, thunderous waves of sound assaulted each person’s ears. All of them were cheering for their idols.

In this moment, they had already forgotten that today’s duel had actually been supposed to be between Wharton and Blumer.

Clearly...

Although Wharton and Blumer were geniuses, compared to their respective elder brothers, there was still a huge gap between them in every aspect. The astonishing

power and might of Linley and Olivier had totally overawed every single person in the Colosseum.

Seeing the two end their battle, the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, felt very gratified as well. At this time, Linley immediately flew down towards his own side.

The joyous roars of the Colosseum continued unabated. By now, in the eyes of the crowd, Linley had already been vaulted to the same level and status of Olivier. If one factored in Linley's youth and his mastery of stone sculpting, perhaps Linley was even more worthy than Olivier of the title of 'Prodigy'.

"Big bro..." From his seated position, Wharton saw Linley fly down. He immediately called out to him in an excited voice.

"Lord." Barker and his brothers went to welcome him as well. Jenne, Rebecca, and Leena all let out sighs of relief as they, too, went forward to excitedly welcome him.

Linley returned to his normal human form and put on a long robe.

"Lord, keep fighting! That Olivier definitely isn't a match for you, your Lordship! I refuse to believe he'll be able to withstand your 'Profound Truths of the Earth' attack." Gates said in a quiet, unhappy voice.

Barker and the others all knew exactly how powerful Linley's 'Profound Truths of the Earth' was. They all believed Linley was capable of winning.

But Linley shook his head and laughed. "Don't underestimate Olivier. For him to be able to create that special attack, Lightshadow Sword, means that the power of his obsidian sword would definitely be astonishing. You must consider this: I was able to gain insights into certain profound truths, but does that mean others are unable to? The Elemental Laws are as vast and boundless as the ocean, and my insights are but a tiny drop of water in that ocean."

Barker and the others all nodded as though they understood.

But right at this moment, a voice rang out from mid-air above the Colosseum. "Mr. Haydson, do you still remember that battle between us six years ago?"

Linley immediately turned his head to stare at the sky. The person who spoke those words was the Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier. Olivier's eyes were filled with light, and he stared at the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, who was just about to fly downwards.

Haydson came to a halt, turning to look at Olivier. Nodding, he said, "Six years ago, on a night with a full moon. Of course I remember that battle. Your speed left a deep impression on me."

Olivier looked at Haydson. Solemnly, he said, "I roamed through many kingdoms and gained victory in all of my battles against the various experts of the other Empires. I lost to you, and only you. Six years...six full years. During these six years, I developed my blackstone sword technique specifically to deal with you."

The Colosseum instantly went silent.

It seemed as though there was quite a bit of history between these two Saint-level experts.

"Oh, to deal with me?" Haydson laughed calmly. "You believe that your obsidian sword is capable of breaking my defense?"

One of the most important reasons why Haydson was known as the 'Monolithic Sword Saint' was because he possessed an extremely powerful defense. Many peak-stage Saint-level experts weren't able to even break through it, much less injure him.

Olivier thought back to their battle six years ago. That was an utter humiliation!

No matter how he attacked Haydson, he couldn't scratch Haydson at all. Instead, he was lightly wounded by the impact of each blow. What's more, Haydson hadn't been slower than him at all.

Domination!

Although Olivier was also a peak-stage Saint-level, compared to Haydson, he had been utterly dominated. It was as though they were on totally different levels. His reputation as the number one Saint-level expert was definitely not unearned.

"We'll know whether or not I can break your defense if we give it a test, right? Mr. Haydson, today at the Colosseum, I formally issue you a challenge. If you accept, then in three months, we'll duel outside the city." Olivier said.

Olivier had consumed a large amount of his battle-qi today, in his battle against Linley. He was no longer in peak shape.

"Challenge?"

Haydson furrowed his forehead, but a hint of a smile was on his face.

The Colosseum immediately began to be filled with roars of excitement. The Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier, had openly challenged the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson. Many people were so excited that their faces were turning red.

Everyone turned to look at the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson.

“Fine. I accept.” Haydson smiled and nodded. “Three months from now, I will definitely sample the power of the obsidian sword technique which you developed over these past six years.”

“It definitely will not disappoint you.” Olivier’s face was filled with the utmost confidence.

The smile on Haydson’s face became even brighter.

Six years ago, having been dominated to the point where he had no fighting spirit left, Olivier had learned how powerful Haydson’s defense was. But Olivier was still this confident. Olivier was no fool. Clearly, he must really have something he felt he could count on.

“Won’t disappoint me? I truly hope it will be as you say.” Haydson was filled with some anticipation.

It had been a long time since he had encountered an opponent who could pose a threat to him.

In three short steps, the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, somehow once more appeared at the judge’s platform. As for Olivier, he flew to the side of his little brother.

The entire Colosseum was filled with the sound of murmuring discussions.

Linley had suddenly taken to the field of battle and easily defeated Kenyon, and then had fought Olivier to a standstill. And now, Olivier had challenge the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, to a battle.

This chain of events had truly excited them no end.

“Everyone.” At this moment, the silver-haired old man returned to the dueling platform. “Just now, I was about to announce the results of the duel. But I didn’t expect that Lord Olivier would arrive.”

The silver-haired old man’s face was covered in smiles. “That made me extremely excited. This was the most exciting day in my long life. Lord Olivier’s battle against

Lord Linley is something I trust none of you will ever forget for the rest of your lives. Just look at the dueling platform, and then look at those flagpoles.”

The battle just now had caused the already-cracked dueling platform to be riddled with gaping holes. Most of the flagpoles around the dueling platform had been snapped in half, and many peoples’ clothes had been blown to different corners of the Colosseum. It was a disaster scene.

But this disaster scene made the 80,000 people begin to laugh.

“Haha, enough talk. Everyone already knows the results of the earlier duel between Wharton and Blumer. Blumer managed to squeak out a victory by a narrow margin.” The silver-haired old man laughed towards Emperor Johann. “His Imperial Majesty has a few words he wishes to say. I hope everyone will listen closely.”

After speaking, the silver-haired old man left the platform.

Emperor Johann now rose to his feet. Some people in the Colosseum looked towards Emperor Johann, while the others looked at Linley, Olivier, and Haydson, the Saint-level experts.

“Today has been the most exciting day in Our life. Whether it was the duel between Wharton and Blumer, or their brothers, Linley and Olivier, what We witnessed was extremely thrilling.”

Emperor Johann revealed a hint of a smile on his face. “Everyone knows that both Wharton and Blumer have asked for the hand of Our daughter, the Seventh Princess, in marriage. After seeing both of these brilliant young men in action today, We have already made our decision. We have decided that on March 15th, at the Martial Palace, We shall openly announce who will be the one to wed Our Seventh Princess.”

Chapter 12

Linley, Wharton, Blumer, and Olivier almost simultaneously turned to stare at Emperor Johann in surprise.

On March 15th, the Emperor would announce who would marry the Seventh Princess?

In the past, Emperor Johann had kept delaying, without seeming to be the slightest bit impatient. Neither Wharton nor Blumer had imagined that Emperor Johann would suddenly say such a thing.

“Nina...” Wharton turned to look at Nina.

Nina shook her head, also confused. “I don’t know anything. My Imperial father didn’t tell me anything about this.” She, too, looked frantically at Emperor Johann, but as the Seventh Princess was a member of imperial clan, her marriage was not something she could design on her own. It was completely up to Emperor Johann to decide.

“Princess.” At this moment, a palace attendant came over. “His Imperial Majesty is about to leave. It is time to return to the palace.”

Nina nodded.

Emperor Johann had forbidden her to leave the palace. The only reason she was able to meet Wharton this time was because of this duel in the Colosseum. After bidding farewell to Wharton, Nina followed the imperial clan back and left.

Linley and Wharton’s forces also withdrew from the Colosseum.

“Olivier.” As Linley left via one of the passageways, he glanced at Olivier, and saw that Olivier was also glancing at him.

These two ultimate geniuses exchanged stares, then turned their heads and left the Colosseum.

Ever since the 80,000 onlookers had witnessed the events in the Colosseum on this day, February 4th, the news about the duel which had taken place at the Colosseum took the imperial capital by storm, filling the entire imperial capital with excitement.

Many people from other cities and other provinces, upon leaving, brought back the news of this duel to their own hometowns as well.

Linley had easily defeated Kenyon, and then fought to a stalemate with Olivier. Olivier had then challenged Haydson. These three events quickly became well-known, and the rumors of these events spread out at astonishing speed.

Linley’s reputation quickly became well-known in the imperial capital, and beyond as well, spreading in every direction.

The imperial capital. Boulder Street. Outside Count Wharton’s manor, one carriage after another came, all filled with people coming to visit Linley.

Within the inner courtyard of the manor.

Linley, Yale, and Reynolds were seated together, chatting and laughing. Although there were many nobles and famous people clustered together at the front courtyard, Linley couldn't be bothered to pay attention to them.

Actually, those nobles expected and understood this in heart. Would someone of Linley's status go personally welcome them?

At Linley's level, ordinary, worldly trappings of power no longer meant anything to him. Even the Emperor would be extremely courteous when dealing with Saint-level experts and wouldn't dare to put on airs.

Without question....

Now that the Baruch clan had produced someone like Linley, even if Linley were to never become a noble within the Empire and even though Wharton was just a Count, the Baruch clan had naturally become an extremely surpassing clan within the imperial capital.

"Third bro, you've been hiding your power and your talents, but now that you've exploded forth onto the scene, you've really shocked quite a few people." Yale laughed loudly.

Reynolds nodded repeatedly as well. "Right, right. I imagine the Radiant Church has a terrible headache right now."

Yale and Reynolds knew about Linley's affairs with the Radiant Church. Given the Radiant Church's power, for them to kill Linley at his current level was virtually impossible.

This was especially true given that Linley was currently in the imperial capital of the O'Brien Empire. The Radiant Church wouldn't dare send any Saint-level experts over, for fear that the War God would misunderstand. This was the War God's territory, after all.

"Dealing with the Radiant Church?" Linley laughed calmly. "I've already killed the principal target of my quest for revenge. As for dealing with the rest of the Radiant Church, I'm not in a particular rush. Right now, I'm no longer afraid of the people of the Radiant Church. But dealing with the Radiant Church...I don't have enough power yet."

The Radiant Church had quite a few peak-stage Saint-level experts.

The currently reigning Holy Emperor, Heidens. The spiritual leader of the Ascetics, Lord Fallen Leaf. The Praetor of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, Osenno. Special Executor, Stehle. And the leader of the Zealots...

Five experts, with Stehle most likely being the weakest of them.

As for the other four, none of them could be underestimated. Even against Stehle, Linley wouldn't be able to win that easily. The reason why Linley had been able to easily defeat Kenyon was only because Kenyon was nothing more than a mid-stage Saint-level expert.

"When my human form reaches the Saint-level and my skills as magus reach the Saint-level..." Linley's eyes flashed with a fierce light.

"When your human form reaches the Saint-level?" Yale and Reynolds exchanged glances. They couldn't help but feel worried for the future Radiant Church.

If Linley were to reach the Saint-level in his human form, then as soon as he transformed, just relying on physical strength, battle-qi, defense, and speed, he would already be at a terrifying level of power. Supreme Warriors were hailed as the most powerful of Saint-levels. They were nothing to laugh at.

Such a powerful foundation combined with Linley's 'Profound Truths of the Wind' and 'Profound Truths of the Earth'....

They believed that once Linley reached the Saint-level in his human form, then his two 'Profound Truths' would also advance in level. And then, once he reached the Saint-level as a magus...

He would be invincible in close combat, and at long-range, the spells of a Saint-level magus were unbeatable.

If his opponents were to use human wave tactics, a single annihilating magical spell would be able to destroy them.

"Too terrifying." Yale and Reynolds were frightened just thinking about it. The current Linley was already a peak-stage Saint-level expert. If in the future, his power increased tenfold in every aspect...who could possibly stop him?

"Enough about this topic for now." Linley laughed calmly.

Yale laughed and nodded. "Third bro, do you know? My old man keeps on telling me to handle this affair or handle that affair, but after hearing that you had arrived here, he's stopped pressing me. In fact, he supported me spending more time with

you. I must say...my Conglomerate really did make a killing off this deal. We got you as one of our Elders so cheaply."

Previously, at the provincial capital of Basil, Yale had given Linley an elder's medal.

"Even if you didn't give me that medal, if the Dawson Conglomerate had any difficulties, given our relationship, Boss Yale, of course I would help out." Linley laughed.

Yale felt a sense of warmth and gratitude in his heart.

"Beautifully said! Come, cheers!" Yale immediately raised his cup in a toast, and Linley and Reynolds joined him, laughing.

People's hearts were hard to discern, especially after growing up. It would be hard for Yale, Linley, and Reynolds to easily trust people now, but towards those good friends they made in their carefree, worry-free childhood years, they felt nothing but the utmost trust.

It is a rare thing for someone to be able to have a true bosom friend.

Linley and the others all felt very fortunate to have such good bros.

"Third Bro." Reynolds pursed his lips. "You really showed off your godlike power this time at the Colosseum. Even our Dunstan clan has sent people to come meet you."

"They sent someone?" Linley was startled. "Who?"

"One of my paternal uncles." Reynolds said disdainfully. "But he didn't have a chance to even see you."

Linley nodded. Linley had refused to meet with any of the people who had come to pay a visit with him. Even the people of the imperial clan had been summarily ignored.

"If your clan truly wants to meet with me, just give me a heads up, and I'll go meet with them." He would of course give face to one of his bros.

"No need." Reynolds shook his head. "I really don't see eye to eye with the people in my clan. Anyhow, the point is, Third Bro, you've really become famous. This makes my life easier as well. Many people in the clan are now much nicer to me as well. They all know that I'm your bro." Chortling, Reynolds looked at Linley. "Third Bro,

in the future, if anything good comes your way, you have to take care of me, your bro, you know!"

"You little punk." Seeing the impish expression on Reynold's face, Linley couldn't help but laugh while berating him. "You've been in the army for seven or eight years now, but you still act this way!"

The four close friends of dormitory 1987. Yale was the playboy type, while Reynolds was the type who feared neither heaven nor earth and would dare to do anything.

"Third Bro, Boss Yale, I'm only this one way in front of you guys. In front of those common soldiers, I always have a hard-ass look on my face." Reynolds intentionally put on a stern, solemn expression.

It had to be said that once Reynolds hardened his face, he did indeed have the look of a soldier in his eyes and demeanor.

After chatting and joking with his close friends, Linley's face grew solemn. "Boss Yale, Fourth Bro. There's something I need you two to help me plan out."

"What is it?" Reynolds and Yale looked at Linley.

Given Linley's current status, what did he have to worry about?

"This has to do with my little brother. That day, Emperor Johann publicly announced that on March 15th, he would openly announce at the Martial Palace who the Seventh Princess will marry." Linley's face was very solemn.

Reynolds and Yale both nodded.

"My little brother, Wharton, and the Seventh Princess share a deep love for each other. Without the Seventh Princess, I fear that my little brother will be in pain for a long, long time. I don't want to see something like that to happen once again, and to my own little brother." Linley's voice was very low.

Reynolds and Yale exchanged glances.

They still remembered how Linley had actually coughed out blood that year when he and Alice had broken up, and then carved out the sculpture 'Awakening From the Dream' over ten days and ten nights, not drinking or eating anything.

Although Linley didn't say anything, they both understood that this had deeply hurt Linley.

"Third Bro, go ahead. Tell us what you want us to do." Yale said directly, and Reynolds nodded by his side as well.

Linley nodded. "Right now, I have two options planned. If Emperor Johann plans to choose my little brother, then that will be a joyous event. But...if he chooses Blumer..."

Linley's face turned cold.

"At that time, I won't give a damn about the fact that he's the Emperor, or how powerful Blumer's older brother is. I will help my little brother and go bring the Seventh Princess out of the palace and allow the two of them to elope together. If anyone tries to stop me, I will kill them!" A killing intent could be seen in Linley's eyes.

Reynolds and Yale couldn't help but feel their hearts shiver.

Others might not understand, but they understood clearly. The five Barker brothers which Linley had brought with him were actually Undying Warriors, and three of them had Saint-level power. And then there was the Blackcloud Panther and Bebe.

Six Saint-level experts!

Once Linley decided to go all out, especially with Bebe who was no weaker than Linley, the entire imperial capital would no doubt begin to tremble from the repercussions of six trouble-making Saint-level experts.

"I hope his Imperial Majesty chooses Wharton." Reynolds and Yale were both praying in their hearts.

"Third Bro." Yale looked solemnly at Linley. "Don't be impatient. Even if you have to bring the Seventh Princess out by force, there's no need to push things to such a state."

"I know." Linley laughed calmly. "I'm only saying, IF someone tries to stop me, then I'll kill them. My little brother and I naturally don't have as firm an understanding of the affairs of the imperial capital as your clans, which is why I hope the two of you can help me think about this issue."

The Dunstan clan and the Dawson clan both had very deep roots of power, and knew many things about the events occurring in the imperial capital.

“Third Bro, set your mind at ease. My Dawson Conglomerate’s forces are quite numerous. We even have a number of palace attendants and maids who will obey the words of the Conglomerate.” Yale said confidently.

Money was a wondrous thing. The power of money could be extremely large.

“When I go back, I will speak with my old man. Don’t worry. My old man will definitely help and support you.” Yale laughed.

Linley was certain about this as well.

If the Chairman of the Dawson Conglomerate were to leak this information to the Emperor, he probably wouldn’t see much of a benefit. After all, the Dawson Conglomerate didn’t lack for money. But as for experts...the Emperor couldn’t simply order a Saint-level expert to serve the Dawson Conglomerate, right?

“You should take primary responsibility for this affair of Third Bro’s. My clan’s authority primarily resides in the military, after all.” Reynolds knew his own limits.

Linley nodded.

“Then I’ll be counting on you, Boss Yale.” Linley said seriously.

Yale nodded confidently.

After the deaths of his parents, Linley had only a single relative left: Wharton. No matter what, he wouldn’t let his little brother be hurt. If Emperor Johann were to select Wharton, then that would be wonderful. But if he didn’t...Linley wasn’t adverse to revealing the true depths of power available to him and forcibly bring Nina out.

Chapter 13

The night descended. In Channe, the imperial capital of the O’Brien Empire, the most military powerful Empire in the Yulan continent, life went on as usual. Aside from a few crowded nightlife streets, the city was calm and peaceful.

East Channe. Boulder Street. After receiving countless carriages over the past few days, Count Wharton’s manor gradually regained its usual calm as well.

Within Count Wharton’s halls.

Linley, Housekeeper Hiri, Hillman, Barker and his brothers, Zassler, and the other core members of the team were in a meeting. They were discussing how to handle the Seventh Princess affair.

“If his Imperial Majesty really were to select Blumer, then I will act in accordance with your plans, big bro.” Wharton didn’t hesitate in the slightest.

Hillman nodded solemnly as well. “The soldiers of the Empire are famous for their courage and fearlessness, while the Seventh Princess is located deep within the palace. If you are discovered while sneaking within...even if you manage to slaughter your way out, no doubt there will be countless deaths.”

After arriving at the O’Brien Empire, Hillman had been stunned by the spirit and aura of the Empire.

Martial!

The entire Empire venerated the War God, and the only deity they worshipped was the War God. This nation deeply respected powerful experts. One could easily sense that just by looking at the near-crazed reactions of those onlookers in the Colosseum.

Cowards who fled from battle would be viewed with disdain by the Empire.

The O’Brien Empire was located in the northern part of the Yulan continent. The entire Empire was often fairly cold all year around, which had also helped the citizens of the Empire in developing their endurance.

“Uncle Hillman, if we are to go bring out the Seventh Princess, we definitely won’t just send a single person. Although the soldiers of the Empire are very powerful, as far as I can tell, they shouldn’t be able to pose a threat to us. The only potential complication is that there are Saint-level experts living in the palace.”

The Emperor didn’t have the ability to demand a Saint-level expert be his personal bodyguard, but the War God would of course station Saint-level experts within the palace to help defend it. The value of the items in the imperial treasury and various hidden treasure rooms were more important than the Emperor himself. Naturally, they would have to be protected.

If someone dared to barge into the imperial palace to take a princess, those resident Saint-level experts might just interfere and stop them. Linley was confident in his ability to deal with Saint-level experts by himself, but if he was bringing an ordinary person like Nina with him, it would be tricky.

Linley looked at Bebe, who was resting on his legs. "Bebe. When the time comes, it will be up to you."

Bebe immediately leapt to his feet, hopping onto the table.

"Hrm? Up to me?" Bebe rolled his beady little black eyes as he looked at Wharton. "Little Wharton, don't worry. I, Bebe, will definitely bring your woman back to you totally unharmed."

"Bebe will go?" Wharton was stunned.

"Little Wharton, don't you trust me, Bebe?" Bebe raised his little head proudly, widening his eyes and staring angrily at Wharton.

Wharton hurriedly shook his head. "It isn't that I don't trust you. It's...the imperial palace will definitely have Saint-level experts residing there. If they fight against each other, will Bebe really be able to bring a weak person like Nina safely?"

"Wharton, given Bebe's level of power, bringing the Seventh Princess out of the imperial palace shouldn't be a problem." Linley had quite a bit of confidence in Bebe's abilities. "Bebe's speed is the fastest I've ever seen."

"The fastest? Big bro, are you saying he's even faster than you and Olivier?" Wharton said in surprise.

"Bebe's speed is the fastest speed I have ever seen in a magical beast." The Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, suddenly spoke up from his position lying on the ground. Blackcloud Panthers were famed for their speed. When they were at the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, Bebe was actually only an early-stage ninth rank. But even then, Bebe was already almost on par with the Blackcloud Panther.

After five or six years had passed, Bebe's speed had surpassed the Blackcloud Panther's by a large margin, reaching a new, terrifying level.

And now? After having reached the Saint-level, Bebe's speed had soared once again!

"Of course he is faster than Olivier." Linley laughed as he rubbed Bebe's little head. "Wharton, let me tell you, Bebe's speed and defense are the greatest I have ever seen. In the past, when I was at the Ernst Institute, Bebe was still in his growing phase and had the power of a magical beast of the seventh or eighth rank. But even after being struck by the dying blow of a peak-stage ninth ranked Armored Razorback Wurm, he still only suffered a severe wound."

This was the first time Wharton had heard of this. It was the first time Zassler and the others had heard this story as well.

“How is that possible?”

They were all stunned. An Armored Razorback Wyrms were one of the most terrifying dragon-type magical beasts.

“When I encountered Haeru in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, Haeru wasn’t able to injure Bebe at all with his attacks. At that time, Bebe was only an early-stage ninth rank. You must know that Haeru’s attacks were able to cause harm to me at that time, even though I had the defensive powers of a late-stage ninth-rank expert after transforming.”

Bebe raised his head even higher upon hearing Linley’s praise, staring around himself haughtily like a victorious general.

“I can tell you this. Bebe’s speed is definitely higher than Olivier’s. What’s more, even if Olivier was able to land a blow of his ‘Sword of the Aurora’ on Bebe, he still probably wouldn’t be able to break past Bebe’s defense.”

Linley laughed.

Bebe’s fur’s defensive power was simply too terrifying.

“The ‘Sword of the Aurora’ most likely wouldn’t be able to break his defense?” Wharton, Hillman and the others fell silent. That unremarkable little Shadowmouse Linley had acquired when he was young had grown to be so powerful.

Bebe shook his head. “Har har har. The defense of me, Bebe, is naturally powerful. That goes without saying. However...I’m not confident in my ability to deal with a blow from the Boss’s ‘Profound Truths of the Earth’.”

Linley’s ‘Profound Truths of the Earth’ all but ignored defense. The only thing defense would do would be to slightly weaken the strength of the vibrations as it passed through.

“Given Bebe’s speed, bringing out the Seventh Princess then fleeing at high speed from the imperial palace shouldn’t be a problem. Most likely, the Saint-level experts in the palace simply wouldn’t have time to catch up.”

“Heh heh. Boss, just entrust this issue to me.” Bebe was extremely excited. He looked as though he wanted to go break the Seventh Princess out right now.

“Don’t be impatient. Emperor Johann hasn’t made his announcement yet with regards to who he will choose, after all.” Right now, Linley was prepared for either eventuality. He wouldn’t be caught offguard.

.....

Both Wharton and Blumer spent these next few days worrying. Many of the nobles of the imperial capital were also secretly guessing which one of them would end up marrying the seventh princess.

In the imperial palace.

The Emperor was currently in a seated meeting with a blue-haired middle-aged man. In front of them was a strategic wargame board in front of them. These games were quite popular in the military, and Emperor Johann often liked to play this game as well.

“Your Imperial Majesty. You’ve raised a fine daughter. She’s actually attracted so many suitors, including my own younger son.” The blue-haired middle-aged man laughed.

This blue-haired middle-aged man was the mighty Imperial Left Premier, Judd Darryl. Judd and Johann were on extremely good terms, and in private they were as close to each other as brothers.

“Judd, stop teasing me.” In front of Judd, Johann only addressed himself as ‘me’, not using the royal ‘we’. Just from this alone, one could tell how close the relationship was between these two men. But of course, he only did so when nobody else was present.

“You don’t know this, but this has been a huge headache for me. Blumer and Wharton aren’t too much of an issue. Either would be a fine choice. But their older brothers...” Emperor Johann sighed. “Olivier and Linley both are absolutely terrifying.”

Judd nodded. “Indeed. I saw that astonishing battle in the air above the Colosseum as well. Olivier and Linley both revealed that they had peak-stage Saint-level power from the very beginning. I didn’t expect that the power they initially revealed was just the tip of the iceberg. They actually both had their own ultimate attacks, and Olivier even dared to challenge the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson.”

Johann nodded. “Olivier and the Monolithic Sword Saint competed before. Last time, Olivier lost. But despite having already competed and thus knowing exactly how

powerful the Monolithic Sword Saint is, he still dares to challenge him yet again? That means he definitely has something that is making him confident."

"I have a feeling that both Olivier and Linley will be people on the level of the Monolithic Sword Saint in the future." Johann sighed. "The most damnable thing is, both of these men are extremely protective of their younger brothers. Judd. You tell me. How can I not have a headache?"

Judd began to laugh.

"Then, your Imperial Majesty, have you made your decision yet?" Judd looked at Johann.

Johann nodded. "I've made my decision."

"Who?" Judd was very curious.

Johann said resignedly, "I admit that Linley is indeed the most brilliant person I have seen in my entire life. He is astonishing in every single aspect. But compared to him, Olivier isn't much inferior. If it weren't for other factors, I would probably choose Wharton."

"Then your Imperial Majesty, you mean to say...you have chosen Blumer?" Judd could tell what Emperor Johann meant.

"Right." Johann nodded.

"There's nothing for it. Blumer is, after all, the personal disciple of the War God. You should know how influential the War God is in the Empire. In addition...over four of his fellow apprentices have come to speak with me. All of them did so for Blumer's sake." Emperor Johann said helplessly.

"Four of them?"

Judd was shocked as well. "I've heard that the personal disciples of the War God rarely get involved in matters. I didn't expect that as soon as he became a personal disciple, four other personal disciples would come out and speak on his behalf."

"Judd, you should know that although in principle, I have the most authority in the Empire, in reality...the War God is still the highest power in the land."

Emperor Johann, in the end, had decided to side with the War God's College.

.....

The Imperial Left Premier's manor.

An astonishingly handsome young man with long, flowing blue hair was taking a casual stroll on the stone roads within his own family's estates. Whenever he saw anyone, even servants, he would smile and nod towards them.

Caylan Darryl, a genius magus.

"In the end, his Imperial Majesty decided to choose Blumer?" Caylan shook his head and sighed. His father, Judd, deeply doted on Caylan. He had even told Caylan about this affair.

"Why? Why can't his Imperial Majesty consider his daughter's feelings?" In his heart, Caylan was actually very unhappy with some of the coldly pragmatic ways in which the noble clans and the imperial clan handled affairs.

In his mind, people should treat other people well. If two people were to be together, it should be because both loved each other. Emperor Johann should have considered things from Nina's standpoint.

"That girl Nina."

Thinking back to how he and Nina had played around together when they were young, Caylan came to a decision. He immediately headed out of the Left Premier's manor. The only thing he said to the housekeeper when he ran into him was, "I'm going out for a walk." Caylan headed straight for Count Wharton's manor on Boulder Street.

Caylan had come to a decision.

He had to inform Wharton of this affair.

....

At nightfall, Wharton was still training in his manor's training area. Next to him, Linley was meditating quietly. Just at this moment, a servant ran over. "Milord, Lord Caylan of the Left Premier's household has arrived."

"Caylan?"

Wharton came to a halt. In his heart, Wharton actually felt very grateful to this former romantic rival of his. After all, Caylan had voluntarily given up his pursuit. If he hadn't, this affair would be even more complicated.

“Caylan’s come? Wharton, I’ll accompany you.” Linley was actually quite curious about this young man who had voluntarily abandoned his pursuit as well.

Linley and Wharton headed directly to the guest hall. When they saw Caylan, the first impression Linley had was that this was a person who was very amiable and easy to get along with.

“Wharton.” Seeing Wharton, Caylan smiled, then looked at Linley. “And this should be your older brother, Master Linley. I’ve heard of Master Linley’s reputation a long time ago.”

Linley smiled at him as well.

“Caylan, please sit.” Wharton was very friendly towards him.

Caylan shook his head. “No need. I’ve come today to tell you something. As soon as I have, I’ll be leaving.” Caylan’s face grew solemn.

“Tell me what?” Wharton said, puzzled.

Caylan said resignedly, “Wharton, based on the information I’ve received, on March 15th, his Imperial Majesty is most likely going to choose Blumer, not you. But of course...since it isn’t March 15th yet, nothing is for sure. However, this information I have is most likely 90% accurate.”

Chapter 14

Wharton was stunned by this sudden news.

Wharton truly wanted to be able to openly wed Nina in the imperial capital, rather than elope with her.

“Caylan, is this information of yours true?” Linley stared at Caylan, asking urgently.

Caylan nodded solemnly. “Master Linley, although his Imperial Majesty hasn’t publicly proclaimed it yet, this information came from my father’s conversation with his Imperial Majesty. Master Linley, I trust you can judge for yourself the authenticity of this news.”

Linley nodded slightly.

There was no need for the Imperial Left Premier to lie to his own son. And, given Linley's spiritual energy as an Arch Magus of the ninth rank, if Caylan were currently lying, Linley should be able to sense something.

"No matter what happens, we brothers would like to thank you for your assistance, Caylan." Linley said in thanks.

Only now did Wharton's mind become clear again. He too said gratefully towards Caylan, "Caylan, thank you for notifying us."

"No need to thank me. I just hope that in the future, Nina will have a happy life. Alright, I need to leave." Caylan bowed slightly towards Linley and Wharton, then left.

Wharton watched Caylan leave, then suddenly turned towards Linley. "Big bro. What should we do?" Wharton's mind was in chaos.

"What should we do?" Linley spoke with absolute conviction. "For now, we immediately begin moving the household out of the imperial capital."

Linley stared coldly in the direction of the imperial palace. "We are out of options. I will immediately instruct people to speak with Yale and have him come. Right now, we'll have to use the secret channels of the Dawson Conglomerate to take Rebecca, Leena, Jenne, and Uncle Hillman's family members out of the imperial capital. And, ideally the Emperor must not discover that they've left."

In truth, it wouldn't be too big of a deal even if the Emperor did find out.

Even if Emperor Johann was suspicious of Linley, so what? Would he dare to offend Linley? He himself was not the War God, after all. And even if he dared to offend Linley...who under his command was actually capable of dealing with Linley?

.....

That very day, Linley invited Yale over. After discussing the issue for quite some time with Yale, Yale immediately slapped his chest and promised, "Third Bro, don't worry about it. It's just a few people. There definitely won't be any issues."

Yale then laughed. "Actually, Third Bro. Even if the Emperor found out, he would pretend he didn't know."

Linley smiled as well.

He had reached the Saint-level. Although the status of the Emperor was very high, Linley didn't have any fear of the man. In truth, the only person Linley was afraid of was that man who was residing on War God Mountain.

"Still, try to avoid being discovered." Linley instructed.

.....

Although, Jenne, Rebecca, and Leena were reluctant to leave, they knew that they would meet again with Linley's group later, and thus they followed the directives of the Dawson Conglomerate and quietly left the imperial capital.

Actually, Linley and Wharton hadn't given up all hope yet.

They hoped that on March 15th, Emperor Johann would choose Wharton at the Martial Palace. Although the chance was very low...it was still possible that Emperor Johann might change his mind.

After all, Nina eloping with Wharton meant parting with her family. As for Wharton, he, Housekeeper Hiri, and Hillman had all become very comfortable and used to living in the imperial capital. Unless it was absolutely necessary, they didn't want to take the final step.

....

Each day passed, and March 15th drew nearer as well. The streets, hotels, and restaurants of the imperial capital were once again filled with discussion regarding Wharton, Blumer, and their older brothers.

Everyone was trying to guess who would be the one to wed the Imperial Seventh Princess.

The hoped for day of March 15th finally arrived. That morning, a rare snowstorm actually descended on the imperial capital early in the morning. Even though the sun came up at seven or eight, it was still hard to see anything farther than ten meters away.

"Whew." Standing outside his manor, Wharton let out a long breath.

These past few days, he had been under a lot of mental pressure.

"Enough. We'll know the answer today. Relax." Linley laughed, clapping Wharton on the shoulder. Wharton turned his head to look at his older brother. Looking at

Linley, Wharton felt as though Linley were his strongest source of support. With Linley there, Wharton felt a sense of confidence.

“Right.” Wharton nodded strongly.

Linley and Wharton immediately got on their carriages, heading in the direction of the imperial palace. Because of the snowstorm, the carriages advanced very slowly. In addition, there were many carriages heading towards the imperial palace this day.

At the gates of the imperial palace.

One carriage after another stopped at the gates, and the various nobles exited their carriages and exchanged pleasantries with each other.

“Lord Olivier has arrived.” Seeing Olivier and Blumer walk out of the carriage together, many of the nobles and ministers outside the gates welcomed them warmly.

Seeing the nobles and ministers walk towards him as soon as he left the carriage, Olivier couldn’t help but frown.

“Second brother, let’s go inside.” Olivier didn’t so much as glance at the nobles as he emitted a wave of force from his body, directly pushing aside the oncoming nobles and senior ministers, yet not harming them in the slightest.

The nobles and ministers all exchanged glances. They couldn’t help but be surprised.

“Your Lordship, we’ve arrived.” A carriage-driver’s voice rang out, and then Wharton and Linley exited the carriage. This time, the nobles and ministers very wisely did not try to draw too near. They just called out words of welcome at a safe distance.

Linley and Wharton didn’t pay too much attention to those nobles either, heading directly for the palace.

“Linley.” Olivier came to a halt, turning his head and bidding Linley welcome.

“Olivier.” Linley still felt a degree of respect towards a powerful rival such as Olivier. Nobody could reach such a level of power without focusing for many years on painstakingly training one’s self.

Linley, Wharton, Olivier, and Blumer walked forward in a line, heading towards the Martial Palace together.

“Linley, that day, at the Colosseum...to be honest, I really wanted to keep fighting with you.” A friendly smile appeared on Olivier’s face.

“Oh? Then why did you give up the chance? I refuse to believe you were afraid of Haydson.” Linley said with a calm laugh.

Olivier and Linley had both sensed each other’s power. Although that day, they had been forced aside by Haydson, aside from Haydson’s power, one of the main reasons they had been forced aside was because they had not yet allowed their attacks to explode at full power.

“It wasn’t that I was afraid of Haydson. It was more that...challenging Haydson was the goal I set for myself six years ago. After mastering the obsidian sword, I absolutely must challenge him.” Olivier glanced at him. “At the Colosseum, I very much hoped to continue to do battle with you. But this battle must come after my battle with Haydson.”

“I don’t want to let Haydson know the secrets to my obsidian sword technique. If I were to battle you with it, wouldn’t I be exposing myself to him?” A hint of a smile was on Olivier’s face. “I really want to see if the ‘Monolithic Sword Saint’ Haydson, famed for his defensive abilities, can withstand my attack.”

Linley nodded.

“In the duel between myself and the Monolithic Sword Saint roughly a month from now, who do you think will win?” Olivier suddenly asked.

Linley paused for a moment.

That day, Linley had seen the layer of flowing black energy on the obsidian sword’s blade. It gave off a very strange sensation. Linley was very confident in his own adamantine heavy sword, but he wasn’t necessarily confident in his ability to withstand his opponent’s blow.”

“It’s possible for either you or the Monolithic Sword Saint to win. But I think the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, has a higher chance of winning. After all, in all these years, no Saint-level expert has been able to beat him. For him to be able to accomplish such a feat means that he surely has some power to rely on.” Linley said impartially.

Olivier nodded. “Right. I admit, six years ago, when I dueled with Haydson, he only revealed a portion of his true power. Haydson...his power is unfathomably deep. But I am filled with confidence towards my obsidian sword as well. No matter how strong his defense is, he shouldn’t be able to withstand it.”

Linley laughed.

How could it be that this Olivier was so similar to him? He himself had that same sort of confidence in his adamantine heavy sword.

“What sort of attack does your obsidian sword possess? Why are you so confident in it?” Linley asked curiously.

Olivier laughed. “My obsidian sword?” Olivier looked at Linley. Pausing for a moment, he said, “I can tell you this. You should know by now that the technique of my obsidian sword is based on my insights into the Elemental Laws of Darkness.”

Linley nodded.

“Thus, in addition to astonishing penetrative power and attack power, my obsidian sword also possesses a spiritual attack.” Olivier said directly with confidence.

“Spiritual attack?” Linley was shocked.

Darkness-style magic did indeed include spirit-based curses. The Elemental Laws of Darkness included all sorts of soul-related properties. But for Olivier to be able to develop a spiritual attack with his obsidian sword based on his insights into these laws was indeed astonishing.

“Perhaps the ordinary, physical attacks of the obsidian sword are very easy to defend against, but the assault on the spirit...ordinary defenses are virtually useless against it. I want to see how Haydson can block it!”

As Olivier spoke, a look of excitement appeared on Blumer’s face as well.

Linley had to admit...

The obsidian sword was indeed very terrifying.

“How frightening. To directly attack the spirit...” Linley was amazed at the power of this technique as well.

“The more powerful one’s spirit is, the greater the chance that they will be able to block this attack. But warriors generally do not have very powerful spiritual energy. Even Saint-level warriors usually don’t have as much spiritual energy as an Arch Magus of the ninth rank.” Olivier was very confident.

Warriors had far less spiritual energy than magi of the same rank.

This technique was aimed precisely at the weak point of warriors.

“Linley. What about the attack for your technique?” Olivier asked as well.

Blumer also looked at Linley. Right now, a hint of arrogance was in Blumer’s eyes. He was certain that Linley wouldn’t be able to match up to his big brother.

Linley didn’t try to hide anything. He said directly. “My technique with the adamantine heavy sword also renders exterior defenses useless. It directly strikes against the internal organs in the opponent’s body.”

“Renders defenses useless?” Olivier’s face changed.

Generally speaking, experts would slowly build up their spiritual energy. On the path to gaining insight into the Laws, their rate of growth in spiritual energy would increase rapidly. For example, Haydson’s spiritual energy should be able to match an Arch Magus of the ninth rank.

But the internal organs were different.

Although it was easy to train one’s muscles, it was extremely hard to train the heart or the intestines. They could only absorb a little bit of elemental essence, which would slightly fortify the heart and the organs.

If one’s organs were destroyed, one would definitely die.

“Renders exterior defenses useless and strikes directly at the insides of the body...” Olivier felt admiration in his heart towards Linley as well. This sort of attack was simply too bizarre, yet Linley had managed to develop it.

Linley similarly felt admiration towards Olivier. The obsidian sword was able to attack someone’s spirit!

.....

The nobles and ministers behind them, upon seeing Linley and Olivier chatting on seemingly amicable terms, couldn’t help but feel surprised.

Soon, Linley and the others arrived outside the Martial Palace.

Linley and Olivier glanced at each other, then led their younger brothers into the Martial Palace together. Actually, even though they had described their ultimate attacks to each other, the attacks would still be very hard to defend against.

Both the spirit and the internal organs were definitely vital points. This was why these two geniuses were so confident, and why they weren’t afraid of telling their rival their secret.

So what if I tell you? Let's see if you can do anything about it!

.....

Quite a few people were gathered in the Martial Palace. Upon Linley and Wharton entering the palace, a palace attendant immediately walked over. "Lord Linley, his Imperial Majesty has already arranged a seat for you. Please take a seat over there."

Ordinary ministers had to remain standing, but Linley did not.

Linley calmly sat down, while Olivier was also led to a seat by a palace attendant. The eyes of the various nobles and ministers in the palace were all focused on Linley and Olivier with a hint of respect and dread.

"Linley, who do you think his Imperial Majesty will select?" Olivier chatted casually with Linley, as though those watching nobles and ministers weren't present at all.

"My younger brother Wharton, of course." Linley said directly.

Olivier glanced at Linley. "I don't think I agree. Oh, his Imperial Majesty has arrived." Linley and Olivier both looked towards the palace gates. At that moment, a number of palace attendants, the Empress, the Imperial Consorts, and seven princesses entered the palace alongside his Imperial Majesty, Emperor Johann.

Chapter 15

The entire Martial Palace fell silent. Seeing Emperor Johann arrive, Linley and Olivier both rose to their feet. In the Martial Palace, the Emperor had the highest rank. They had to at least give the Emperor some face.

Wharton's gaze fell upon Nina. Nina was behind her mother, the Empress. As soon as she entered, she looked at him.

"Big lunk..." Nina's mouth moved, but she didn't speak.

Wharton squeezed out a smile of his own, but his eyes were firm. The two knew what the other was thinking from the gaze they shared. No matter who Emperor Johann selected today, Wharton wouldn't give up.

"Nina is mine. Nobody can take her from me." Wharton glanced at Blumer from afar, then turned to look at his Imperial Majesty, Emperor Johann.

"Your Imperial Majesty!"

All the nobles and ministers in the palace fell to one knee, bowing respectfully.

"Arise, all of you." Emperor Johann turned to look at Olivier and Linley, saying modestly, "Linley, Olivier, please, take your seats."

Wharton also stared at Linley from afar. With Linley there, Wharton felt the utmost confidence.

Emperor Johann then turned to look at the Empress and his Imperial Consorts. "All of you, you can sit over there. Nina, sit with your Imperial mother." The Empress, the Imperial Consorts, and the seven princesses all sat on the other side of the palace, where a row of seats had been arranged.

In the O'Brien Empire, the Empress and the consorts were not permitted to get involved in politics. In the Martial Palace, even the Empress could only sit below and watch.

"Today is a very important day. Haha...We expect many of you have been waiting for this day. Indeed, today, We are going to announce who will be the one to marry Our beloved daughter." Emperor Johann smiled towards Nina as he spoke.

Linley, Olivier, and everyone else stared raptly at Emperor Johann.

Wharton felt his heart begin to thump loudly.

Who would it be?

Himself? Or Blumer?

"As for who We will select, before We make the announcement, We would like to introduce two of the personal disciples of the War God." Emperor Johann saw the two figures flying in this direction from far away. Both men were dressed in long blue robes. Upon entering the Martial Palace, the first one nodded towards Blumer.

"Your Imperial Majesty." Only then did the two men greet Emperor Johann.

The expression on Wharton's face changed.

The personal disciples of the War God? Seeing these two arrive, Wharton sensed that things were not going to go well. Blumer, not too far away from him, cast Wharton a delighted glance.

These two had clearly come in support of Blumer.

“We shall make some introductions, first. This person on the left is Mr. Lanke [Lan’ke], a personal disciple of the War God and a Saint-level expert.” Emperor Johann said in a loud voice. “This person on the right is Mr. Castro [Ka’si’tē’luo], a personal disciple of the War God and a Saint-level expert as well.”

The nobles and ministers in the Martial Palace all made gestures of respect towards the two Saint-level experts.

“Lanke, Castro, please take a seat over there, near Linley and Olivier.” Emperor Johann said with a smile.

Lanke, Castro, Linley, and Olivier were all seated together.

Wharton cleared his throat. Right now, he truly felt under a great deal of pressure. The atmosphere was clearly in favor of Blumer. At this moment in time, Emperor Johann spoke.

“Blumer, Wharton, come to the middle.” Emperor Johann said in a clear voice.

“Yes, your Imperial Majesty.”

Taking a deep breath, Wharton forced himself to stop thinking wild thoughts, then headed to the center of the palace. Blumer and Wharton stared at each other coldly, then stood shoulder to shoulder.

Everyone’s attention was focused on these two.

“We are going to announce who shall become Nina’s husband. Naturally, that’s only if you two both desire to marry Nina. We shall ask you one more time; do the two of you both wish to marry Nina?” Emperor Johann said in a solemn voice.

This was the final moment.

Blumer immediately said. “Your Imperial Majesty, my greatest desire and dream is to be able to take Princess Nina as my wife.”

Wharton said respectfully, “Your Imperial Majesty, it is also your servant’s dream that I can have an open, public marriage ceremony with Nina, and that the two of us shall be together forever, never to be apart.”

As Wharton spoke, he looked at Nina.

Nina was looking at Wharton as well. Their gazes met. Most of the people in the palace noticed this, and Blumer’s face sank.

"Haha, wonderful." Emperor Johann laughed loudly. "Since both of you are so sincere, We are very gratified. But in the end, We must choose one person."

As he spoke, Emperor Johann cast a smiling glance at Blumer.

This glance immediately dissipated the rage in Blumer's heart. He could sense what Emperor Johann's hidden meaning was, and Blumer suddenly felt confidence.

Who would be chosen?

To the contrary, Wharton was growing anxious as he looked anxiously at Emperor Johann.

"Everyone, please be quiet. We solemnly announce that-"

"Wait." That personal disciple of the War God, Castro, stood up and spoke out, preventing Emperor Johann from speaking. Emperor Johann looked questioningly towards him.

If it had been someone else who had interrupted him, he would've shouted in anger already. But the person stopping him was Castro.

"Your Imperial Majesty." Castro actually headed towards Emperor Johann, in the middle of the palace. All of the nobles and ministers were stupefied. "There is something I must tell you in private, your Imperial Majesty." As he spoke, Castro glanced at Blumer.

The palace attendants didn't know whether they should try to block him or not try to block him.

"Step aside. Castro has something he wishes to discuss with Us." Emperor Johann instructed his attendants to step aside, and Castro walked directly to Emperor Johann's side.

Emperor Johann looked at Castro quizzically.

Castro whispered a few words quietly into Emperor Johann's ear. Emperor Johann frowned, glancing at Castro. But then Emperor Johann started, and a smile appeared on his face.

Castro stepped away.

"What is this Castro doing?" Linley had a very bad feeling about this. "Could it be that Castro is privately asking Emperor Johann to select Blumer?"

In Linley's heart, he truly hoped that his younger brother would have a perfect marriage.

But there was nothing that could be done about it. Behind Blumer was the might of the War God's College.

"Haha. Just then, Castro had a minor matter to discuss with Us. Now, We shall officially announce that Our daughter shall be wed to..." A smile was on Emperor Johann's face.

The entire palace was so silent, you could hear a needle falling.

Wharton and Blumer both looked anxiously at Emperor Johann.

"Shall be wed too..." Emperor Johann proclaimed loudly. "Wharton Baruch!"

"Wharton Baruch!" "Wharton Baruch!" "Wharton Baruch!" Wharton's name echoed throughout the Martial Palace.

The entire Martial Palace became utterly still.

Blumer's eyes bulged out.

Wharton was stunned.

Nina was stupefied as well.

"Ah!!!!" Wharton suddenly let out a wild howl of excitement, then charged directly towards Nina. Nina recovered as well, throwing herself directly into Wharton's embrace.

Wharton and Nina actually tightly embraced each other, there in the Martial Palace, as though no one was watching. Nina was utterly thrilled.

"Impossible!" Blumer shook his head nonstop, totally unable to accept this result.

In truth, Blumer didn't feel too much affection towards Princess Nina. But Blumer had a strong, possessive nature, wanting to possess the best of everything. And when he was young, people would often compare him against Wharton.

Thus, Blumer wanted to surpass Wharton in every way.

Challenging him to a duel. Wooing Nina. They were all for this reason. The only person Blumer truly loved was himself.

“Wharton. Nina.” Emperor Johann’s voice rang out.

Only now did Wharton and Nina come to their senses. This was the Martial Palace. Nina’s face turned red, and she immediately retreated into her Imperial mother’s embrace.

Wharton immediately bowed as well. “Your Imperial Majesty, your servant was too excited.”

“We can understand. We can understand.” Emperor Johann laughed and nodded.

And then, Emperor Johann looked at Blumer. “Blumer, you and Wharton are both outstanding talents. Only, We have to consider what is best for our daughter. Do you understand?”

What could Blumer do?

He wasn’t Wharton. In Blumer’s heart, even if Princess Nina became his wife, she would still be nothing more than something for him to show off. He didn’t have much affection for Nina herself. Although it was hard for Blumer to accept this defeat, he didn’t lose his composure.

“I understand the difficult choice your Imperial Majesty had to make.” Blumer could only grind his teeth and force out these words, swallowing the bile that had risen to his throat.

Emperor Johann nodded with satisfaction.

“Haha...” Emperor Johann laughed loudly. “We are extremely happy today. How about this. Let Us decide the date for Wharton and Nina’s engagement. Next month, on the 12th. Wharton, that will be the date of your engagement ceremony with Nina. Do you have any objections?”

“Thank you, your Imperial Majesty. Your servant has no objections.” Right now, Wharton was all smiles. How could he have any objections?

Linley, standing next to Wharton, felt very happy as well upon seeing his little brother’s joy. His little brother’s romantic relationship was about to come to a happy conclusion. At last, he was confident it wouldn’t turn out like his own had.

Thinking once more about how his own had turned out, Linley felt a bit of pain in his heart.

“Linley, congratulations.” The personal disciple of the War God who sat next to him, Lanke, said in a warm manner.

Castro laughed as well. “Master Linley, on War God Mountain, I am a big collector of stone sculptures. I’ve always been full of admiration for you, Master Linley. If you have some free time, Master Linley, please come to War God Mountain for a stroll. War God Mountain welcomes you at any time.”

“I will definitely go when I am free.” Linley was in a fine mood today as well.

Olivier directly rose to his feet and walked to his little brother, Blumer, patting Blumer on the shoulder.

“Linley, Wharton, today you shall enjoy a meal with Us, what do you say?” Emperor Johann’s voice rang out. “Olivier, Blumer, Castro, Lanke, you should come with Us as well.”

Castro and Lanke rose to their feet.

“Your Imperial Majesty, we have affairs we need to attend to back at War God Mountain. We won’t be able to accompany you.” Castro said.

“That’s fine.” Emperor Johann didn’t try to force the issue.

“Your Imperial Majesty, I also need to go prepare for my duel with Haydson next month. My second brother shall accompany me back as well.” Olivier also refused.

Blumer had already lost. How could he stay and have a meal with them?

Emperor Johann understood this and nodded.

But Linley and Wharton accepted Emperor Johann’s invitation. In the future, Emperor Johann would be Wharton’s father-in-law. They had to give him this bit of face.

“I didn’t expect this.” Linley’s face was covered with smiles.

Indeed, he truly had not. Linley had already sent out Jenne, Leena, and Rebecca from the imperial capital, and was already prepared to take Nina by force and let Nina and Wharton elope. But the end result had actually been this. This truly was surprising.

After the court was adjourned, Nina left alongside the Empress and the Imperial Consorts.

But Linley and Wharton followed Emperor Johann to a different place.

“Big bro.” Wharton’s face was still covered in smiles. He was simply too happy. Without meaning to, he continued to beam happily.

Linley was very happy for Wharton as well.

“Linley, in the future, we’ll all be one family.” Emperor Johann laughed towards Linley.

“Right. All one family.” Linley smiled back.

.....

Lanke and Castro were flying in the air side by side, heading straight for the War God Mountain outside the imperial capital.

“What was that all about? What did you say to Johann?” Lanke was confused this entire time. Why did Emperor Johann choose Wharton? Emperor Johann had previously already agreed to choose Blumer.

“I told Johann that our master, the War God, was ordering him to choose Wharton!” Castro said in an unhappy voice.

“Master?” Lanke was stunned.

“How should I know? Right after I entered the palace, Master’s voice rang out in my mind and instructed me to speak with Johann. And then, Master delivered the same message to Johann as well.” Castro said helplessly. “Master most likely was afraid that if he simply spoke to Johann, Johann wouldn’t believe that it truly was the War God who was speaking to him. After all, Master has never spoken to Johann mentally before.”

“Why did Master do such a thing?” Lanke said quizzically.

“How should I know?” Castro had no idea either.

Chapter 16

The imperial palace was under heavy guard, and valiant knights could be seen everywhere, along with beautiful palace serving ladies. Emperor Johann and Linley walked side by side, with Wharton slightly behind them. Behind these three men

were a number of palace attendants and serving ladies. All of the soldiers they encountered on the trip over bowed respectfully upon seeing Emperor Johann.

“That is Master Linley.” Many warriors, seeing Linley walking by Emperor Johann’s side, began to murmur quietly amongst themselves.

Their eyes were filled with veneration and adoration towards Linley. They were all young, and many of them were no older than Linley. Many of the young men in the Empire had set Linley as their goal towards which they would strive.

“The O’Brien Empire lives up to its name of being the most military powerful of the six major powers. All of these warriors in the imperial palace are very powerful.” On the way over, Linley noticed that not a single one of the warriors here was weaker than the sixth rank.

Most were of the sixth, and many were of the seventh. Even a few eighth rank warriors could be seen.

Even the ordinary patrolling guards were so powerful. One could imagine how powerful the Empire as a whole was.

“Linley, look. The eyes of those guards are lighting up when they see you. I’m afraid that in their hearts, the veneration they feel towards you is greater than for Us.” Emperor Johann said with a loud laugh.

Linley laughed calmly.

Ever since that duel in the Colosseum, Linley’s fame had spread throughout the O’Brien Empire, especially given his young age. He had already become a legend.

Linley was in his twenties, and not only a genius sculptor, but also a genius magus and a Saint-level warrior. In the hearts of many, even though they might not be as talented as Linley, as long as they worked hard, they might be able to reach at least 10% of Linley’s accomplishments, and they would be happy with that.

This had actually caused many young people in the Empire to train even more painstakingly.

The O’Brien Empire had a long-standing custom that whenever a genius appeared, the Empire would officially spread the news alongside the rumors of the common-folk. The impact on the citizens of the Empire was actually quite large.

....

The imperial flower garden. There was a banquet table filled with food, and the only people seated there were Emperor Johann, Linley, and Wharton.

The palace serving maids brought plate after plate of delicacies forward, while the guards around them kept a solemn watch around them.

“You can all leave now.” Emperor Johann waved his hand.

“Yes, your Imperial Majesty.”

The surrounding maids, servants, and guards all dispersed. Soon afterwards, only Emperor Johann, Linley, and Wharton were present.

Emperor Johann glanced at Wharton. Actually, on the entire trip over from the Martial Palace, his heart was filled with questions.

Why did the War God wish to help Wharton?

In the Empire, the War God was unquestionably the highest power. Wharton was nothing compared to him. The War God and Wharton most likely didn’t have much of a relationship.

“Could it be that our venerable ancestor, the War God, has some sort of connection to the ancestors of the Dragonblood Warrior clan? That shouldn’t be the case either. Five thousand years ago, when the Empire was founded, the Dragonblood Warrior, Baruch, was very famous, true, but they were nothing more than peak-stage Saint-level combatants. There was still a major gap between them and the War God. What sort of relationship could the two possibly have had?”

Emperor Johann didn’t believe it.

The War God was someone on the level of the High Priest. How much of a relationship could he possibly have had with Baruch? Even if he had one, could it have been a deep enough relationship that he would help out the descendants of Baruch, five thousand years later?

“Wharton.” Emperor Johann didn’t think about it any longer. Smiling, he said, “A while later, you and Nina will get engaged. You need to take good care of Nina. This child has the temper of a spoiled princess. We hope you can be accommodating towards her.”

Wharton straightened his chest, hurriedly saying, “Your Imperial Majesty, don’t worry.”

But Linley was staring at Emperor Johann.

"A few days ago, Caylan said that Emperor Johann was going to choose Blumer, but now..." Linley was puzzled about this.

Linley asked directly, "Your Imperial Majesty, I wish to ask, why is it that you chose my younger brother Wharton?"

Emperor Johann was a bit startled.

"Haha..." Emperor Johann laughed loudly. "Linley, didn't We already discuss this at the palace? We were considering things from Nina's standpoint. Nina likes Wharton, after all. We are deeply gratified that We are able to bring Nina happiness."

Linley snickered secretly.

If Emperor Johann really were considering things from Nina's standpoint, then when Wharton had asked for her hand in marriage, he wouldn't have delayed and caused a large chain of events to occur before accepting.

Emperor Johann saw the look on Linley's face. "What? You don't believe it, Linley?"

"I don't fully believe it, actually." Linley said bluntly.

Emperor Johann started. Generally speaking, who would dare speak to him in such a way? But the one who said these words was Linley, a peak-stage Saint-level expert. Emperor Johann let out two awkward chuckles. "Actually, We admit that We had originally been considering Blumer."

That was more like it.

Although that had been Linley's first time meeting with Caylan, he had the feeling that Caylan was a trustworthy person.

"Linley, you should know that in reality, it is Saint-level experts which determine the rise and fall of an Empire." Emperor Johann sighed. "Saint-level experts can easily kill the enemy's leaders despite being surrounded by a million soldiers. Saint-level magi can utilize destructive forbidden-spells and destroy a million man army entirely. It can be said that in the eyes of ordinary people, Saint-levels are absolutely invincible experts."

Linley nodded. When he was young, Saint-levels were indeed the ultimate combatants in existence.

"Although We are the Emperor, We do not dare issue orders to Saint-levels. If We were to offend them, they might leave the Empire. We trust there are many places which would welcome a Saint-level expert's arrival." Emperor Johann laughed bitterly.

Linley understood this.

If a Saint-level expert were to flee, given their flying ability, that would be very simple.

"Both Blumer and Wharton are likely to reach the Saint-level in the future. But the critical issue is...Blumer belongs to the War God's College. All of the experts of the Empire are clustered around the War God's College. We do not wish to anger the War God's College. After all, there is an entire group of Saint-level experts there, not just one or two!"

An entire group of Saint-level experts. Just hearing the words was enough to make people shiver.

"With multiple fellow apprentices of Blumer coming to speak on his behalf, We didn't have a choice." Emperor Johann shook his head and sighed.

"Then why did you choose my younger brother Wharton in the end?" Linley asked.

He had been wondering about this the entire time. What was the reason?

Emperor Johann turned a puzzled gaze towards Linley and Wharton. "Linley. Does your Baruch clan have some sort of historical relationship with the War God?"

"The War God?"

Linley immediately understood. Shocked, he said, "Your Imperial Majesty, are you saying that it was the War God who caused you to select Wharton?"

"Of course." Emperor Johann said, "Linley, think about it. In the Empire, whose word carries even more weight than the members of the War God's College? Only the War God, the highest power of the land."

"Our venerable ancestor, the War God, directly spoke to Us mentally and ordered Us to choose Wharton." A hint of excitement was in Emperor Johann's eyes. "This was the first time We have ever heard the voice of our venerable ancestor, the War God."

The War God!

It had actually been the War God!

The War God was an incredible figure. Five thousand years ago, he had battled the High Priest over the Yulan river to a standstill, proving that he was definitely a Deity-level combatant.

After five thousand years, although no one had ever seen the War God fight again, everyone understood that given the War God's natural talent, he was undoubtedly even more terrifyingly powerful now.

The War God had trained incredibly fast, going from ordinary person to Deity-level in just a few centuries.

His sudden rise to prominence five thousand years ago had caused his fame and glory to completely eclipse even the Four Supreme Warriors, becoming the most brilliant shining star of that era.

"The War God helped my little brother?" Linley couldn't understand it.

"Could it be that he knows my side has six Saint-level experts?" Linley began to wonder. Given the War God's power, he definitely could sense the strength of Linley's forces.

Linley shook his head.

Impossible. To a Deity, Saint-level experts were nothing. Most likely, the War God could kill all six of them with one blow.

"Then what's the reason? Could it really be because he had some relationship with the ancestors of the Baruch clan?" Linley truly didn't understand what the reason was behind the War God's actions.

.....

West of the imperial capital. War God Mountain. Aside from the primary peak, there were four other peaks. Connecting two of the peaks was a natural cave tunnel.

Lanke and Castro were walking side by side in the tunnel.

After travelling several hundred meters through the winding tunnel, the tunnel suddenly turned downwards sharply. If one stared downwards into that bizarre, deep dark hole, not a single thing could be seen. Nobody could tell how deep that tunnel was.

"Whoosh."

Lanke and Castro jumped directly into the deep hole. They fell down at a fairly slow speed. After falling for several thousand meters, the two landed as gently as leaves on the ground. From the entrance of the tunnel to this hole was merely a thousand meters, but this hole took them several thousand meters underground.

“Master usually spends his time in closed-door training, and whenever he does so, he’ll usually spend several years, several decades, or even longer training. When he is engaged in training, he’ll virtually never speak to us mentally. But this time, at the Martial Palace, he actually reached out to us mentally and told us to tell Johann to choose Wharton, then told us to come back here.” Lanke was mystified.

This was very contrary to the War God’s habits.

There were very few matters in the world which an ascetic such as War God would issue orders about.

“Junior apprentice-brother, don’t think about it too much. Master surely has his reasons for acting like this. All we need to do is listen and obey.” Castro said.

“Yes, senior apprentice-brother.” Lanke nodded.

To the disciples of the War God’s College, the commands of the War God were not to be flouted. They would do whatever the War God ordered them to do. There was no need to think about it.

“Rumble...” A blistering heat could be sensed in the depths of the tunnel. As they walked in, the stones were slowly turning red as well.

The temperature here was very high!

After going several hundred more meters, Lanke and Castro came to a halt in front of a pitch-black stone door. The stone walls surrounding this door were already scarlet red, and the temperature was so high that even Lanke and Castro had to use their battle-qi on their feet to protect themselves.

If a piece of paper was tossed out, it would most likely instantly be set alight.

“You’ve come.” A calm voice drifted out from behind the door.

The War God’s voice was very soft, but it carried a penetrative power. The voice was like a needle, piercing directly into one’s soul. Castro and Lanke, his two disciples, even suspected...that the War God could possibly dissipate their soul with his voice alone.

This was one of the reasons why Castro and the other personal disciples of the War God feared their Master so much. The War God was simply too powerful.

“Yes, Master.” Castro and Lanke said respectfully. Castro continued, “Master, what instructions have you for us?”

The War God’s voice rang out yet again. “April 12th will be the day of the engagement ceremony for that kid Wharton. Go speak to your eldest apprentice-brother and acquire an interspatial ring. On the day of that kid Wharton’s engagement ceremony, give it to him as his engagement present.”

Castro and Lanke were utterly stunned.

The War God was giving an engagement present?

This had never happened before. Even when they, his personal disciples, had gotten married, the War God paid no heed. After all, was the War God someone who had to send congratulatory gifts to others? Even if he wanted to do so, who would be worthy of accepting his gifts?

But the War God was now ordering them to deliver a congratulatory gift for Wharton’s engagement ceremony?

“You can leave now.” The War God’s calm voice once more sounded out in the tunnel.

Castro and Lanke stared at the pitch-black stone door, then glanced at each other. Although they didn’t understand it at all, they didn’t dare disobey the orders of the War God.

“Yes, Master.” Lanke and Castro replied, their voices filled with incomparable respect.

Chapter 17

Yulan calendar, year 10009, April 12th. This was the day on which Wharton and Nina would be engaged at the imperial capital. One of the two lovers was the younger brother of a peak-stage Saint-level expert, while the other was the daughter of the Emperor. An engagement ceremony such as this would definitely be very well attended.

The nobles of the imperial capital who received invitation letters all felt extremely proud. Many common nobles weren't qualified to be invited to this event; after all, if everyone was invited, the Count's manor wouldn't be able to hold all those people.

The Count's manor was very festive today, and the outside of the manor was flooded with arriving carriages, which blocked off a large half of the Boulder Street. The guards and servants of the nobles weren't qualified to enter the manor, and all had to wait outside. In total, there were thousands of guards and servants waiting outside.

An ocean of people!

Each carriage was gaudier and more lavish than the next, and each young noble lady was dressed more beautifully and was more mesmerizing than the last. The engagement ceremony banquet at the manor was definitely one of the imperial events of the highest caliber, and the people who came were all people of great status.

"Big bro, I still feel really uncomfortable wearing this." Wharton had wasted quite a bit of his time in his room. He felt more nervous than he ever had before.

Linley laughed. "Enough, Wharton. You already look very handsome. Have some confidence!"

Wharton took a deep breath.

"Let's go. Time to welcome the guests in the hall." Linley laughingly lectured. "You can't just keep on having Grandpa Hiri welcome the guests. For example, when his Imperial Majesty comes, how can you possibly not be out there to welcome him?"

Wharton and Linley entered the main hall, and as soon as they did, they breathed sharply. Good heavens. There were so many people there. What's more, that was just a small portion of the nobles who would be present. Many senior personages hadn't arrived yet.

"The imperial capital really is the imperial capital. There are far more nobles here than in Fenlai City." Linley sighed.

In the past, Linley had participated in Alice and Kalan's engagement ceremony. The number of people present that day clearly were far fewer than the number attending the ceremony today, and were clearly a much lower caliber of people as well.

The noble clans of a kingdom naturally were far fewer in number than the noble clans of an empire.

As soon as Linley and Wharton entered the main hall, they immediately became the center of attention. Wharton's massive frame was simply too eye-catching, and many people went over there to greet him warmly.

"Wharton, come over here." Housekeeper Hiri immediately called out to him.

Wharton immediately hastened over to the main door of the hall and began to greet each of the arriving guests. As for Linley, he filled a cup with wine, then casually walked to the center of the hall, occasionally clinking cups with the guests.

These nobles were very conscientious and didn't try to get too close to Linley or bother him too much, only gently tipping their cups towards him from afar.

However...

Some of the young noble ladies had their eyes set on Linley. They knew that Linley was unmarried. A twenty-something year old peak-stage Saint-level expert...where would anyone find another man like this?

"What a headache." Linley saw three separate young noble ladies begin to drift in his direction. Linley could only pretend not to have seen them.

When these three young noble ladies were a meter away from Linley...

"Whoosh." A soft yet firm gust of wind suddenly pressed against their bodies. No matter what they tried, those three young noble ladies couldn't move any closer towards Linley.

And then, Linley raised his cup, smiling faintly, before heading to a corner of the main hall and sitting down.

"Just then, Master Linley..." A golden-haired and golden-eyed beautiful young noble lady got excited. "What sort of amazing technique was that?"

The other two young noble ladies didn't know either.

Not knowing wasn't an issue. This didn't impact Linley's status in their heart. In fact, to the contrary; this made Linley seem all the more powerful and mysterious to them. Actually, what Linley had just used was just the simplest manipulations of the wind.

"Did you see Master Linley's Dragonform transformation that day at the Colosseum? He seemed so wild and untamed. I was so excited."

"He really is exciting. I like this type. Those men at school are all soft as cotton. None of them are extremely manly like him."

Linley's hearing was simply too good. Hearing what the young noble ladies were saying to each other, Linley felt a wave of resignation in his heart. They called his Dragonform transformation 'wild and untamed'? And 'extremely manly'?"

"His Imperial Majesty has arrived!"

The voice of the guest announcer at the main gates immediately increased in volume. He had clearly shouted using battle-qi, allowing all the guests in the hall to hear clearly.

The entire hall full of nobles fell silent as they all looked towards the gates. There were many nobles outside the hall as well. There were too many guests here today, and the hall simply couldn't fit them all inside.

"Johann has arrived?" Linley stood up and left the hall.

"Milord." The uniformed Gates called out towards Linley.

Today, all five of the Barker brothers were dressed in handsome matching uniforms. As they wandered around the manor, their massive size and frame made the hearts of the nobles quail. The nobles all secretly sighed...the Dragonblood Warrior clan lives up to its name. Even their guards were so incredible.

Emperor Johann was a sight to behold, as always. Holding the Empress's hand, he was followed by a few bodyguards.

"Wharton." Emperor Johann immediately picked out Wharton from the crowd. Seeing how handsome and strong Wharton looked, Johann nodded with satisfaction. "Not bad, not bad."

Linley arrived.

"Your Imperial Majesty, come rest inside." Linley laughed.

"Alright. We have much to discuss with you, Master Linley." Emperor Johann said warmly. Immediately, the two of them entered the guest hall. As for the other nobles and ministers, they very conscientiously stepped aside for them.

So many of the nobles of the imperial capital had arrived today, but Linley hadn't gone to welcome any of them. The nobles all felt that this was normal. A Saint-level expert, go welcome them? Was that possible?

"The Chairman of the Dawson Conglomerate has arrived!"

That high-pitched voice rang out again. The Chairman of the Dawson Conglomerate, one of the three major trading unions of the Yulan Continent. Although the Dawson Conglomerate didn't actually possess any Saint-level experts, it still possessed astonishing economic power.

Even Emperor Johann stood up and said to Linley, "Monroe Dawson is one of Our good friends."

Linley rose as well.

Yale was sure to have come alongside Monroe Dawson. Of course Linley would go welcome them.

"Haha..." The big-bellied Monroe Dawson made his way over, with Yale by his father's side. Seeing Emperor Johann, Monroe Dawson immediately bowed slightly. "Monroe pays his respects to the mighty Emperor Johann."

Emperor Johann smiled warmly. "Monroe, today, Linley is the master of this location. There's no need for you to stand on too much courtesy with Us."

"Master Linley and I have been friends for a long time. Only, I didn't expect that in a few scant years, Master Linley had reached such a level of accomplishment. Haha..." Monroe Dawson laughed so hard his eyes turned into merry slits.

"Uncle Dawson, just call me Linley." Linley smiled as he spoke. He and Yale were the best of bros. Naturally, he had to be respectful to Yale's father.

"Wharton, come and greet Uncle Dawson."

Wharton came over as well.

"What a handsome, strapping young lad." Monroe Dawson's eyes lit up when he saw Wharton. Clearly, Wharton's size and stature had surprised him.

One noble after another arrived, and even Blumer arrived. Blumer acted in an extremely gentlemanly manner today, and even spent some time congratulating Wharton.

But Wharton, in his heart, still felt rather uncomfortable around Blumer. He kept on feeling that Blumer wasn't speaking sincerely.

"Blumer, your elder brother didn't come today?" Emperor Johann laughed as he spoke to Blumer.

"My elder brother is currently in closed-door meditation training, in preparation for his duel with Lord Haydson next month." Blumer smiled.

"Oh. Makes sense." Emperor Johann nodded.

Blumer then glanced towards Wharton, who was welcoming guests at the gate. A cold light flashed in his eyes. In his heart, Blumer was very unhappy that Wharton had managed to successfully ask for Nina's hand in marriage.

"The Monolithic Sword Saint, Lord Haydson, has arrived!"

When the voice rang out, Emperor Johann, Linley, Monroe Dawson, and many others immediately rose to their feet and headed out the hall.

"Haydson came?" Linley was very surprised and pleased. He had thought that Haydson would be busy preparing for next month's duel.

Very soon, the gray-robed Haydson walked in by himself. Emperor Johann, Linley, Wharton, and the others all went to welcome him.

"Haha, Wharton, congratulations." A very friendly smile was on Haydson's face. He then looked at Linley. Jokingly, he said, "Linley, your little brother is getting engaged. What about you, the big brother?"

Linley started. He hadn't expected Haydson to ask such a question.

"Hahaha..." Emperor Johann began to laugh loudly as well, nodding repeatedly. "Linley, it really is time for you to get married. If you take a fancy to someone, just tell Us. We will definitely make sure that lucky girl is sent to you."

Linley didn't know whether to laugh or to cry.

"Lords from the War God's College have arrived!"

This call from the gate extricated Linley from having to answer the question, as they all went to welcome the people from the War God's College.

"I didn't expect that the War God's College would also send people over." Emperor Johann sighed emotionally.

Haydson nodded as well. The War God's College was one of the most major organizations in the Yulan continent. They rarely participated in engagement or wedding events, unless it was the event of one of their own people. Only then would the other fellow apprentices attend.

Lanke and Castro walked in, side by side.

Castro smiled. "Haha, brother Wharton, congratulations." As Castro figured, given how well-disposed his master was towards Wharton, then Wharton was qualified to be addressed by him as 'brother Wharton'."

But this term of address baffled Linley, Johann, Haydson, and the others.

The members of the War God's College were extremely arrogant.

They rarely paid much attention to other people. Castro's attitude really caused quite a few people to feel puzzled.

"Today, we two fellow apprentices have come here as representatives of the entire War God's College to congratulate you, Wharton, on this joyful occasion. This is the gift which our master personally instructed us to bring you." Castro directly held out a brocade box towards Wharton.

Master?

Everyone around them was stunned. The War God was giving a gift?

"We are incredibly grateful." Linley was the first to recover. Smiling, he accepted the congratulatory gift. "Castro, Lanke, come, have a rest over here."

Generally speaking, the servants would accept any congratulatory gifts at the gate...but how would the gift registrars of the Count's manor dare to take the gifts from people belonging to the War God's College? Even if they had come empty-handed, it would have been an honor.

The Count's manor was a hubbub of noise. Many high ranking nobles such as Dukes and Counts were all chatting amongst themselves, while Linley, Emperor Johan, Monroe Dawson, Castro, Lanke, Haydson, and the others chatted casually as well.

The guests at this engagement ceremony were all absolutely incredible.

Just look at the seating arrangements. At Linley's table, the only people present aside from Saint-levels experts were an Emperor and the Chairman of a Conglomerate. Just at this moment...

"A Saint-level expert is flying over." Many people called out. Linley glanced through the door at the sky, and indeed, saw a human form gracefully soaring through the clouds.

Linley, Emperor Johann, and the others all rose to their feet in confusion.

But no matter who it was, given this person was a Saint-level expert, they had to give him some face.

With a mid-air flash, the man arrived at the main gate. This was a white-haired old man, with a white beard as well. Clearly, he was ancient, but his dreamy, sky-blue eyes were very sharp.

"Haha, I came uninvited. I hope I won't be unwelcome here?" The white-haired old man laughed heartily.

He didn't even look at Linley and the others, instead flying directly towards the place where Linley and the others had been seated. As he drew near, Haydson and Castro hurriedly stepped out of his way, and the white-haired old man sat down on the seat previously occupied by the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson.

"This is a pretty good seat. I'll sit here." The white-haired old man laughed loudly.

Emperor Johann frowned. This man was a bit too impolite. Linley, as well, felt that this white-haired old man was a little too arrogant.

"Might I ask..." Before Linley even had a chance to finish his words, the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, quickly said in an extremely courteously voice, "I didn't expect you could come here, milord. This truly is an unexpected surprise for us."

By his side, both Castro and Lanke hurriedly nodded their heads in assent. Their attitudes were unbelievably humble.

Chapter 18

Linley, Emperor Johann, and the others were all puzzled. Who in the world was this mysterious white-haired old man? Even the number one Saint-level expert, Haydson, was incredibly deferential to him.

"Could it be the War God?" Linley secretly wondered.

Most likely, only a Deity could make Haydson be this deferential. And clearly, both Castro and Lanke recognized this person as well. He was most likely the War God.

"Add a chair." Housekeeper Hiri instructed a nearby servant.

Linley took a step forward. Smiling, he said, "Sir, we two brothers feel extremely honored to have you attend my younger brother's engagement ceremony. Might I know your name, sir?"

"Me?" The white-haired old man glanced smilingly at Linley. "My name is Hodan [Huo'dan]."

"Hodan?" Linley quickly combed through his memory, but he definitely didn't recall an expert by the name of Hodan.

"Linley, no need to ask anything else. It is wonderful that Lord Hodan is able to attend today. Let's all sit down first." The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, said with a laugh.

Although Linley and Emperor Johann and the others were mystified, they all sat down.

"Milord, let us offer you a toast, milord." Castro and Lanke both raised their cups.

Milord?

A few things suddenly came to Linley's awareness.

First of all, most likely only a Deity was capable of making a Saint-level expert address them as 'milord'. At the same time...if Castro and Lanke addressed him as 'milord' and not as 'Master', then this person was most likely not the War God.

The continent had five prominent Deities. Linley had already met Dylin and Cesar, while he had yet to meet the High Priest, the War God, and the King of the Forest of Darkness. The white-haired old man should therefore be one of those three.

He was now certain that this man was not the War God.

So this person should be either the High Priest or the King of the Forest of Darkness.

"However, it has been countless years since those two Deities showed themselves. How could Haydson, Castro, and Lanke all recognize him?" Linley refused to believe it.

A Deity-level expert didn't make appearances so easily.

"Linley." The white-haired old man named 'Hodan' raised his cup. "Come, let us toast each other."

Linley hurriedly raised his cup.

"When I see you, Linley, I think about the past affairs of your Baruch clan and those several Dragonblood Warriors. Haha...unexpectedly, several thousand years have passed in the blink of an eye." Hodan laughed merrily.

These words caused Linley's heart to twitch, hard.

"Those several Dragonblood Warriors of the Baruch clan? Thousands of years ago?" Linley looked at Hodan with confusion.

In his own clan's history books, there had been three generations of Dragonblood Warriors, but later on a thousand years would pass between each generation of Dragonblood Warriors.

But this Hodan was saying that thousands of years ago, he had met several Dragonblood Warriors?

"I didn't know that Elder Hodan knew the ancestors of my clan." Linley laughed.

"Of course. Your clan leader, Baruch, really is a formidable fellow." Hodan said with feeling. "But your Baruch clan has really decayed. In the past, when you had dozens of Dragonblood Warriors, who would dare offend you? Such a pity, such a pity..."

Linley stared.

"Dozens of Dragonblood Warriors?" Linley and Wharton both looked at Hodan in shock.

"What, is that surprising?" Hodan looked at Linley and Wharton.

Haydson hurriedly said, "Milord, it would be best if you discuss this somewhere else. There are too many people here." It was best if they didn't reveal these secrets to the ordinary nobles.

"It is fine. Only the people at this table can hear us. As for the people outside of it, no matter how loudly we speak, they won't be able to overhear anything." Hodan chortled.

There were eight people at this table. Aside from Wharton, Emperor Johann, and Monroe Dawson, the others all possessed at least Saint-level power, with the white-haired old man's power being immeasurably deeper.

"Dozens of Dragonblood Warriors?"

Linley and Wharton could hardly dare to believe it.

Their ancestral records were very clear; the first three generations of their clan produced three Dragonblood Warriors, after which a thousand years would pass between Dragonblood Warriors. In total, there had been only five. How could there have been dozens of Dragonblood Warriors a few thousand years back?"

"The Four Supreme Warrior clans...alas. All have decayed to a sorry state. In the past, the Four Supreme Warrior clans were quite glorious." Hodan said with emotion.

Linley suddenly thought of something.

He remembered how in the 'Secret Dragonblood Manual', there were instructions on the second way by which one could become a Dragonblood Warrior; drinking live dragon's blood. But based on that manual, all three Dragonblood Warriors were natural-born Dragonblood Warriors.

If the second method had never been used successfully, why would the Secret Dragonblood Manual record it?

In the past, both Linley and Doehring Cowart had suspected that the manual had been altered. His clan's history should probably have included examples of Dragonblood Warriors who were produced via drinking live dragon's blood.

"But I didn't expect there were dozens!" Both Linley and Wharton felt extremely shocked internally.

"Oh, that little girl named Nina is coming over." The white-haired old man, Hodan, beamed, causing Linley and the other shocked participants to turn and look.

Linley and the others all stood up, and Wharton immediately went over to welcome Nina.

Holding hands, Wharton and Nina went from table to table, toasting the guests. But right now, both Wharton and Linley, who remained at his seat, felt their minds to be in a state of utter confusion.

Their clan's history clearly wasn't as simple as they had imagined.

In addition...

Saint-level experts had extremely long lifespans. How could it be that not a single Dragonblood Warrior in their clan was remaining? And not just their clan; even the Undying Warrior clan, the Violetflame Warrior clan, and the Tigerstripe Warrior

clan had seen the same thing. All of the Four Supreme Warrior clans had bizarrely collapsed.

“Secret...” Linley understood that the history of the continent definitely contained many hidden secrets that were different from the official accounts.

For example, the King of Killers, Cesar, had once told Linley that five thousand years ago, many experts from other planes of existence had descended to the plane of the Yulan continent. But in the history books, there was no such thing.

Linley found himself somewhat mentally disengaged as the engagement ceremony continued. He kept on thinking about these things.

He even wanted to have a private chat with that white-haired old man named Hodan.

Clearly, this Hodan person knew many things about the affairs of the past.

After dinner, the various nobles in the main hall were chatting idly. At this time, Linley, who had grown frantic with impatience, suddenly heard a sentence that was as beautiful as music from the heavens.

“Linley, come with me. I have something to discuss with you.”

Hodan actually reached out to Linley and actively asked to speak to him privately.

Wharton looked at his older brother, and Linley instructed, “Wharton, you stay here. Afterwards, go spend some time with Nina. As for Mr. Hodan, I’ll speak with him.” As he spoke, Linley followed Hodan out of the main hall.

Haydson, Castro, and Lanke all glanced at each other.

“I wonder what Linley will decide.” Haydson sighed with emotion.

Hodan and Linley left the main hall. While walking, Hodan said, “Linley, where are those two Saint-level experts of yours? Call them over as well.”

Linley was startled.

How did this Hodan know everything?

Hodan knew the names of Wharton and Nina, and he also knew that Linley had two magical beasts. He even knew that Bebe was a Saint-level magical beast.

Linley didn't try to deny anything. He immediately spiritually contacted Bebe and Haeru, calling them over. Since there were Saint-level experts present today, Linley hadn't allowed Bebe or Haeru to go to the main hall.

"Let's go to the training grounds behind the manor. There's nobody there." Hodan chuckled.

"Groooooowl."

Haeru and Bebe arrived by Linley's side.

"Squeaaaaak!" Bebe continued to pretend.

"Little fellow, I know that you are a Saint-level magical beast. Stop squeaking." Hodan laughed as he reached out to rub Bebe on the head. Bebe wanted to move aside, but to his astonishment, he found that it was impossible for him to move. He had no choice but to allow Hodan to rub his head.

Linley was secretly shocked.

Without question, Hodan was a Deity-level expert.

"He really is a Deity. How many Deities does the continent have?" Linley thought to himself, while at the same time, he followed Hodan to the training grounds.

"Boss, who is that old fellow? How is he so powerful?" Bebe didn't dare to be too playful right now, appearing very obedient.

Haeru obediently followed by Linley's side as well.

"Close the door first. Without my orders, no one is to be permitted entry." Linley instructed the servants, and then Hodan headed directly to a stone bench and sat down.

"You can sit as well." Hodan pointed to another seat opposite from him.

Linley sat down obediently, then said humbly, "Mr. Hodan, I am totally lost right now. Can you please provide me with guidance?"

"The reason I came today is primarily for the sake of your two magical beasts." Hodan smiled. "Of course, you and those three other Undying Warriors who possess the Saint-level of power can also just barely be considered qualified to be worthy of being considered my targets."

"Hrm?" Linley looked at Hodan with confusion.

Hodan smiled. "Linley, in the countless years of the Yulan continent's history, there have been countless geniuses as well. Even if there is only one every century, in a hundred thousand years, that means there have been a thousand. But right now, how many Saint-level experts exist in the Yulan continent? Each Empire only has a few dozen."

"Saint-level experts can live for over a hundred thousand years?" Linley said in shock.

"Saint-level experts, so long as they aren't killed, can easily live a hundred thousand years." Hodan laughed calmly. "Upon reaching the Saint-level, you are virtually immortal and immune to aging. However, you can still be killed, of course."

Linley was also puzzled.

If this was the case, why were there so few Saint-level experts? After all, the Yulan continent definitely saw a new Saint-level expert every century.

"Then what is the reason?" Linley asked.

"The reason is...they've gone to other planes." Hodan smiled.

"Other planes?" Linley started.

But then, Linley suddenly understood, and he hurriedly asked, "Could it be that the ancestors of the Baruch clan have also gone to other planes?"

"Right. Those dozens of Dragonblood Warriors have all gone to the 'Infernal Realm', one of the Four Higher Planes. In the past, I even visited your ancestor, Baruch, in the Infernal Realm and drank with him." Hodan laughed heartily.

"The Infernal Realm. Mr. Hodan, you come from the Infernal Realm?" Linley felt as though the secrets of the universe were unfolding before his very eyes.

Hodan nodded. "Right. Linley, let me put it to you like this...in the ordinary, material world, once a life form has reached the Saint-level, they will be qualified to enter the Four Higher Planes, or perhaps the Seven Divine Planes. They will be permitted to train and live there."

"In the history of the Yulan continent, many Saint-level experts have already left the Yulan continent and chosen to enter the Four Higher Planes or the Seven Divine Planes." Hodan smiled.

Linley nodded to show he understood.

“Technically speaking, you and those other three Undying Warriors, despite possessing Saint-level power, aren’t yet at the Saint-level in your human forms. There was actually no need for me to hurry over here to speak to you. My primary targets were those two Saint-level magical beasts of yours. They have both reached the Saint-level. They are allowed to choose...to continue to live here at the Yulan continent, or to enter the other planes.”

Hodan quickly said with a hint of enticement, “The Four Higher Planes are much better than the Seven Divine Planes. In the ‘Infernal Realm’, for example, experts as are common as the clouds, and Saint-level experts are nothing more than ordinary people. In that place you will have excellent training opportunities, and treasures such as interspatial rings are as common as water. There’s a terrifyingly large amount of treasures there.”

Linley understood.

Only upon reaching the Saint-level was one qualified to enter the Higher Planes. Naturally, the Four Higher Planes would have experts everywhere, with Saint-level experts being nothing more than commoners.

“I’m not going. I’m staying with the Boss.” Bebe shook his head.

“I’m not going either. I’m staying with my master.” Haeru said.

Hodan looked at Linley. Laughing, he said, “Linley, your real power has already reached the peak-stage of the Saint-level. You are completely qualified to enter the Higher Planes. Do you wish to go?”

Linley didn’t respond. Instead, he looked at Hodan. “Mr. Hodan, who are you, exactly?”

“Me? Oh. I forgot to tell you.” Hodan smiled at Linley. “I am the Planar Overseer for the Yulan continent.”

Chapter 19

“Planar Overseer?”

Hearing this title, Linley somewhat understood. The term ‘overseer’ contained elements of both ‘watching over’ and ‘protecting’. No wonder this Hodan possessed such astonishing strength.

“Linley, you haven’t answered me yet. Are you willing to go to the other planes?” Hodan urged.

It was up to each individual Saint-level as to whether or not they wished to go to the higher planes. The Planar Overseer was only responsible for telling them about this choice.

Linley remained very calm.

“Mr. Hodan, honestly speaking, I don’t know anything about the other planes. Can you perhaps enlighten me a bit?” Linley asked humbly.

Doehring Cowart actually knew about the existence of the Planar Overseer, but at the time, Linley was far too weak, and so Doehring Cowart didn’t see a need to tell Linley right away. But Doehring Cowart had explained a little bit about the Four Higher Planes.

“There are many material planes such as the Yulan continent. These material planes are all about the same. On some, magical beasts are the primary power, while in others, other races are in power. In some, humans are in power. These planes are essentially the same.” Hodan began explaining some of the most basic information regarding the Higher Planes.

“Above these material planes are the Four Higher Planes and the Seven Divine Planes.” Hodan laughed. “The Seven Divine Planes were created by the seven principal Sovereigns of the seven elements. As for the Four Higher Planes, they were created by the four Overgods.”

Linley nodded.

“The Seven Divine Planes and the Four Higher Planes...what are the differences between them?” Linley asked.

Hodan laughed. “The Seven Divine Planes are planes of earth, fire, water, wind, lightning, light, and darkness. For example, you are someone who is training in the Laws of the Earth. If you were to enter the Divine Plane of Earth, you would find that you trained twice as fast using half the effort.”

“However, the Seven Divine Planes are inferior to the Four Higher Planes. It’s best if you enter the Higher Realms.” Hodan said enticingly. “Linley, you must understand, the Higher Planes were created by the Overgods. The four Overgods far outstrip the power of the Sovereigns.”

"Overgods? Can anyone reach the level of Overgod through training?" Linley suddenly asked.

Hodan stared at Linley in astonishment.

"Haha..." Hodan began to roar with laughter, as though he had heard the funniest joke ever.

Linley looked at Hodan in confusion.

"Linley, it seems you really know nothing." Hodan laughed. "You have no idea. The Overgods aren't people who reached that level through training. Let me explain to you. Every single race has the chance to become a Sovereign through training; the chance is just extremely, extremely low..."

"How low?" Linley asked.

"Let me give an example. In a hundred million ordinary Deities, it would be rare for a single Sovereign to appear." Hodan laughed. "For example, in the Divine Realm of Light, there are countless Demigods, Gods, and Highgods. But in ten million years, you might not see a single Sovereign appear from their ranks."

Linley was silent.

"Demigods, Gods, and Highgods?" Linley frowned as he looked at Hodan in confusion.

In the past, Grandpa Doehring had only discussed the existence of 'Gods'. He didn't explain further.

"The 'divine spark' of Deities are of different levels as well." Hodan said calmly. "Once you reach a certain level of mastery with regards to the Laws, the Laws will themselves grant you their recognition and descend into you a 'divine spark', allowing you to become a Deity. But when you begin, you'll only be a Demigod. As you continue to understand more...at a certain level, you will become a God."

Only now did Linley understand.

"What level of Deity is the War God?" Linley asked with curiosity.

Hodan glanced at Linley with irritation, then laughed. "For the sake of your ancestors, I'll tell you. The War God...is only a Demigod."

"A Demigod?" Linley blinked twice.

Good heavens. The War God had become a Deity over five thousand years ago. Given his talent, he should be much more powerful now than before. How could he still just be a Demigod?

“Haha, Linley, do you think it is easy to advance from being a Demigod to a God?” Hodan shook his head.

“But the War God was a Demigod five thousand years ago.” Linley immediately said.

“At that time, he was indeed a Demigod. But there are differences amongst Demigods as well. For example, let’s say that to become a Demigod, one must master 1% of a Law, while to become a God, one must master 10% of a Law. Someone who only mastered 9% of a Law is only a Demigod...but is he on the same level of power as someone who mastered 1% of a Law? Even though they are both Demigods?” Hodan explained in a simplified way.

Linley now understood.

“Linley, don’t be too greedy. On the road to becoming a Deity, every single step is extremely arduous. There have been countless Demigods in the Four Higher Planes who have spent hundreds of millions of years, or even billions of years, without being able to break through from the Demigod level to the God level.”

“But what about the Overgods?” Linley immediately said.

“The Overgods?” Hodan laughed again. “You were asking me earlier if it was possible for humans to reach the Overgod level, right? Let me explain...”

“The Overgods...” Hodan continued to snicker at Linley. “Linley, the Overgods aren’t people, nor do they have genders. They don’t even have bodies.”

“Uh?” Linley stared at Hodan in surprise.

“The four Overgods are manifestations of the Four Prime Laws. They are nothing more than the very embodiment of the Laws that flow through the countless planes! The Overgod of Death is the embodiment of the Laws of Death. The Overgod of Destruction is the incarnation of the Laws of Destruction. The Overgod of Life is the avatar of the Laws of Life. And the Overgod of Fate is the personification of the Laws of Fate!”

Hodan laughed as he looked at Linley. “You tell me. Can you become an Overgod through training?”

Linley understood.

The four Overgods were a natural part of the infinite planes of the multiverse. They were the heavens, they were the earth...they were part of the souls of every living creature.

They were the Laws themselves!

"The Overgods are beings of pure Law. They know nothing of love, hate, friendship, grudges, or other such emotions. They are cold. If you cursed an Overgod, they would ignore you. If you flattered them, they will not reward you. However...if you were to damage the planes themselves, then the Overgods would punish you."

Linley laughed.

Although the Overgods existed, they were the personification of the Laws of the multiverse. There was no need to pay them any heed or attention at all.

"Curse an Overgod? Someone would dare to curse an Overgod?" Linley asked, laughing.

Hodan stared at him, then laughingly berated Linley, "I was just giving an example. In all my years in the Netherworld, I've never heard of an Overgod manifesting in person. As far as you should be concerned, the most invincible power in the world is the power of the Sovereigns. The will of the Sovereigns is not to be disobeyed!"

Linley nodded, signifying understanding.

"Linley, the Seven Divine Planes are extremely beneficial for someone training in a particular Law. But the Four Higher Planes are different. No matter what sort of Law you are studying, the speed at which you train in the Four Higher Planes will be as fast as if you were training in the relevant Law in one of the Seven Divine Planes." Hodan said persuasively. "Thus, the Four Higher Planes are the best choices."

The Four Higher Planes – the Celestial Realm, the Netherworld, the Infernal Realm, and the Life Realm.

"Linley. The ancestors of your clan are all in the Infernal Realm. Why don't you go there as well?" Hodan continued.

Go?

Linley had already made up his mind.

The Infernal Realm only had the ancestors he had never met. There wasn't much point going there. By contrast, in the Yulan continent, he had his younger brother Wharton, and his dear bros, Yale, Reynolds, and George. He also had many friends such as Barker, his brothers, Jenne, and the others.

In addition...

He also had a goal that was unfinished. The utter destruction of the Radiant Church.

Seeing Linley's hesitation, Hodan continued to speak persuasively. "Linley, the Infernal Realm has countless races and all sorts of powerful species of creatures, which have all sorts of attacks. In the Infernal Realm, training is extremely exciting."

"No need."

Linley shook his head and laughed. "Mr. Hodan, thank you for telling me so much. However, I am still young, and I haven't even gotten married. I'm in no rush to go there."

Hearing Linley say this, Hodan could only nod with resignation.

As the Planar Overseer, he was forbidden from forcing people to leave this plane. If others were unwilling to leave, they could remain in their own plane as long as they liked, even to the point of becoming a Highgod.

"Mr. Hodan, I wish to ask you, if one goes to a Higher Plane, can one return?" Linley suddenly asked.

Hodan shook his head. "It is virtually impossible. Out of hundred thousand people who enter a Higher Plane, there usually isn't even a single person who can come back to his homeland. This is because returning home carries an extremely high price."

Linley understood.

No wonder the War God and the High Priest were unwilling to go to the Higher Planes. For even Deity-level experts to be unwilling to go, one could imagine how difficult returning was.

Not even one out of a hundred thousand would be able to return.

This probability was simply too low.

"Mr. Hodan, I'm so sorry to have wasted your time." Linley said humbly.

"Since that's the case, I'll leave now." Hodan stood up. "Linley, if one day you wish to leave this plane, you can come to the Arctic Icecap at the end of the North Sea to find me. I live atop a glacier in the Arctic Icecap."

Linley felt surprised.

"The Arctic Icecap?" This was the first time Linley had heard that at the end of the North Sea, there was an 'Arctic Icecap'.

"Mr. Hodan, what about at the end of the South Sea?" Linley was curious.

"The South Sea is far larger than the North Sea, and is virtually boundless. But at the end of it...at the end of it is the end of the Yulan plane. You'll find nothing there but chaotic space.

Linley now understood.

After speaking, Hodan immediately flew into the air and left, heading north and quickly disappearing. Linley stood there, not moving for a long time.

This discussion with Hodan had a major impact on Linley.

"Boss, I'm actually pretty curious about the Higher Planes. Wow. All sorts of amazing species, and Saint-levels are just ordinary people there. That place must be awesome." Bebe's eyes were gleaming.

Linley patted Bebe on his little head. "Do you want to die?" Most likely, any expert in that plane could easily kill them.

Linley already had a plan for his future training.

Sovereign? That was too far away.

One step at a time. First, reach the Demigod level. Upon becoming a Demigod, Linley would have confidence in his ability to destroy the Radiant Church.

Linley knew his own limits. Given his current power, he wasn't yet strong enough to impose his will upon and act as he pleased in the Yulan continent.

"It's hard to say if I'd even be able to defeat Olivier." Linley didn't feel any confidence at all when it came to Olivier's spiritual attack in his obsidian sword.

Spiritual attack?

Linley suddenly thought of his Coiling Dragon ring. In the past, when divine power had entered Linley's soul, a burst of power had emanated from the Coiling Dragon ring to counter it.

"But Grandpa Doebling was also a master of the Coiling Dragon ring in the past. Why is it that at the point of his death, the ring didn't help him?" Linley was puzzled.

The mysterious power of the Coiling Dragon had to be activated somehow.

The divine power of the Radiant Sovereign had done just that, somehow agitating the power in the Coiling Dragon ring, causing it to manifest protectively. But Olivier's attack wouldn't necessarily also activate the Coiling Dragon ring's protective energy.

"I have no idea what secrets lie hidden within the Coiling Dragon ring. But no matter what, I can't just put all my hopes on the Coiling Dragon ring. In battle, the only one I can rely on is myself."

Right now, the manor was filled with countless nobles and magnates, but Linley and his two magical beasts remained in the training courtyard in the rear of the manor. As if no one was present, Linley began to train.

"After going to the Infernal Realm, returning will be almost impossible. I can't possibly hope that I will receive any support from my ancestors. Everything that I do in the Yulan continent, I will have to rely on myself."

But Linley had forgotten something. Why was it that the dozens of Dragonblood Warriors as well as all of the other Supreme Warriors had left the Yulan continent en masse, and hadn't left even a single Saint-level expert behind to look after their descendants?

The waters of the Yulan continent were far deeper than Linley could imagine.

Chapter 20

By nightfall, many of the guests at the manor had left, and most of the nobles were now gone. The engagement banquet was an afternoon banquet. The people still remaining at the manor were all relatively important guests.

"Wharton, where is your big brother?" Yale poured two cups of wine, then walked to Wharton's side. "I haven't seen him for almost the entire afternoon, I think?"

"My big brother left with that Mr. Hodan. No clue where he went." Wharton shook his head.

"I'll go look for him. Given your big brother's personality, he might have run off to the training yard and started to train." Yale left the guest hall. Making his way down the corridors, he arrived at the training courtyard after a while.

"Drip." "Drip."

Water flowed down the manmade fountain. Each drip-drop of water could be heard clearly in the silent training courtyard. Linley was seated in the meditative trance on the grass, not moving at all.

If one moved closer and examined him carefully, one might see that Linley's muscles were contracting and expanding in a very rhythmic way. And as they did, a natural gust of wind seemed to have surrounded Linley.

His spirit had become one with the endless earth and attuned to the boundless wind.

"Boom!" "Boom!"

"Whoosh!" "Whoosh!"

His eyes shut, Linley could feel the trembling, vibrating spirit of the earth, and the formless wind which filled the skies. After a long time, Linley opened his eyes.

"His lordship issued the order that no one is to be permitted to enter without his permission."

"Not even me?" Yale sounded very resigned.

"Boss Yale, come in." Linley had a hint of a smile on his lips, and he immediately stood up. Only now did Yale walk in. Looking at Linley, he chuckled, "Third Bro, I knew it. You are training again. Why are you so hard working? You are already a peak-stage Saint-level. You are already incredibly powerful."

Linley glanced at Yale and chuckled.

To Yale, Linley could already be considered a peerless expert in the Yulan continent. Even the Emperor of the O'Brien Empire was incredibly courteous to Linley. But after having interacted with Hodan, Linley knew that he was still far from being adequate.

"Come, have some wine with me. I haven't had much of a chance to drink with you today." Yale put down two flasks of wine on the stone table.

Linley sat down as well, then retrieved two winecups from his interspatial ring.

"It's a pity that Fourth Bro couldn't be here." Linley shook his head and sighed. A month ago, when Emperor Johann had announced who would marry his daughter, Reynolds had left the imperial capital.

"He had no choice. The army had ordered him to return. He had to go." Yale said helplessly. "Last time, he just so happened to be on leave, which was why we three bros were able to have a reunion. It isn't so bad for Fourth Bro, but for Second Bro...if we want to see him, we have to go to the Yulan Empire."

The distance from the Yulan Empire to the O'Brien Empire was quite far.

Chatting idly with his dear bro, Linley felt extremely cheerful. Why would he want to give this up to go to a Higher Plane and engage in slaughter?

The most enjoyable part of training was in the spirit gaining a greater and greater level of understanding. It wasn't about the bloody slaughter.

"Third Bro, in a few days, I'll leave the imperial capital as well." Yale sighed emotionally. "Nothing for it. I'm still young. There are many things which the Conglomerate needs me to handle. Otherwise, in the future, I won't be qualified to manage it."

Linley understood.

An organization on the level of the Dawson Conglomerate definitely wouldn't award someone the leadership position just because one's father previously held it. Otherwise, the Dawson Conglomerate wouldn't be as powerful as it currently was. Of course, being the son of the Chairman had its advantages, but one also needed to have ability and a work history.

"Next month, Olivier will be doing battle with the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson. Doesn't that mean you'll miss it?" Linley laughed.

"Yeah." Yale laughed uncaringly. "I'm just a magus anyhow. How much would I understand from watching a battle between two Saint-level warriors?"

Linley suddenly put down his wine cup and looked at the door. "Someone is coming."

"Who?" Yale was puzzled. "Someone else knows that you are here?"

"Those two from the War God's College." Linley laughed calmly.

Saint-level experts could use spiritual energy to scan an area. The comparatively tiny manor could easily be totally covered by it. Naturally, they could easily locate Linley.

Castro and Lanke walked towards the back courtyard side by side. They were very surprised by their master's instructions.

"Although Linley's strength is not bad, there's no need for Master to act this way." Lanke shook his head.

"I don't understand either." Castro also felt puzzled.

Both of them were confused. Walking into the back courtyard, they saw that the guards had opened the door for them already. Castro and Lanke exchanged a glance.

"Linley knew that we were coming."

Castro and Lanke immediately saw Linley seated alongside Yale. Seeing that Yale was here as well, the two frowned.

Yale immediately stood up. "Third Bro, people have come to see you. Why don't you have a chat with them? I'll go to the main hall for now."

Linley nodded.

After Yale left, Castro and Lanke sat down. Linley asked, "Castro, Lanke, why have you come?"

Castro laughed. "Linley, the two of us have come bearing an invitation from our master to pay a visit to the War God's College."

"The War God is inviting me to the War God's College?" Linley could hardly believe it.

How could someone like the War God be inviting him?

Lanke nodded. "Linley, Master did indeed instruct us to have you come to the War God's College. And what's more, Master has instructed our senior apprentice-brother to welcome you personally. Linley, you must understand, even when the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, visited the War God's College in the past, our senior apprentice-brother didn't come to welcome him."

"Oh?"

Linley was intrigued. Who was this 'senior apprentice-brother' of the War God's College?

“Your senior apprentice-brother should be the first disciple of the War God, right? Wait...how old is he?” Linley suddenly came to a realization. Good heavens. The War God was someone who had reached this level over five thousand years ago.

Castro and Lanke both grinned.

“Right. Our senior apprentice-brother is already five thousand years old. He isn’t much younger than our master.” Castro nodded. “We were very surprised as well when we heard that Master instructed our senior apprentice-brother to welcome you.”

Linley knew that the War God only accepted a personal disciple every three hundred years.

The youngest one was Blumer, only thirty years old or so. But the oldest was this senior apprentice-brother, and was five thousand years old.

“Alright. When should I go?” Linley asked with a laugh.

“You can come to the War God’s College at any time. How about this? Here’s my insignia. When you arrive at the War God’s College, hand it to one of our fellow apprentices. They will inform me.” With a flip of his hand, Castro retrieved a scarlet red medal which had Castro’s name carved onto it.

Accepting the insignia, Linley laughed and nodded. “Don’t worry. I will definitely go.”

Castro and Lanke both nodded, then left.

Linley secretly wondered to himself...if the senior apprentice-brother of the War God’s College was five thousand years old, how powerful was he?

Could he be weaker than the Monolithic Sword Saint?

Linley didn’t much believe it. The Monolithic Sword Saint was only a few centuries old, while the senior apprentice-brother had been training in the War God’s College for thousands of years with the War God’s personal guidance. After five thousand years, how could he possibly not be strong?

The primary peak of the War God Mountain was covered with many buildings. These were the places where the honorary disciples of the War God stayed, along with Kenyon, Castro, and Lanke, who were in charge of the ordinary affairs of War God Mountain, great or small.

The mountain wind was very strong this day. Many of the honorary disciples of the War God's College were training.

"Haaargh!"

A boulder weighing dozens of tons was easily tossed from one person to another, who in turn kicked it back...the two honorary disciples of the war God's College were able to easily kick around this massive boulder.

Most importantly, the boulder wasn't damaged at all.

This required a very fine control of both physical strength and battle-qi.

Right at this time, a graceful figure appeared, soaring across the sky like blue smoke. It gracefully circled around War God Mountain, and in the blink of an eye it arrived at the War God's College.

"Hrm?" One of the honorary disciples of the War God's College looked at the arrival with surprise. He hadn't seen anyone earlier, but then all of a sudden, this person had appeared.

"Are you...Master Linley?" The honorary disciple could recognize him. On the day of the duel at the Colosseum, the honorary disciple had gone to support Blumer.

Smiling, Linley nodded. "Castro invited me to come. This is his insignia. Please go inform him." Linley tossed the insignia to the honorary disciple.

The honorary disciple hurriedly said, "I'll go report it right away. Master Linley, please take a rest first."

Linley nodded. Wharton's engagement ceremony had concluded two days ago, and today, Linley had accepted the invitation and headed off to the War God's College and see for himself what it was all about.

"That person is Master Linley. I hear he's only 27 years old."

"Even apprentice-brother Kenyon was easily defeated by him."

"I was there that day. It only took one blow. Compared to Linley, apprentice-brother Kenyon is very weak."

"Apprentice-brother Kenyon is only the 25th personal disciple of our master. It is understandable that he is a bit weaker. Most likely, apprentice-brother Castro is roughly on par with Linley. If the first ten disciples of Master had been the ones to do battle, most likely they would have easily beat Linley."

Many of the honorary disciples of the War God's College murmured in quiet voices while casting glances at Linley. All of these honorary disciples were geniuses in their own right, and they were all proud and arrogant. But compared to Linley, they had a long way to go.

"Linley." A bright voice rang out.

Castro ran out, his face wreathed in smiles. "You came after all. Come, let's go to Bluethunder Peak."

"Not here?" Linley was puzzled.

Clearly, this primary peak was the largest one with the most buildings. The other four peaks didn't have much construction.

Castro laughed. "Linley, we have many honorary disciples here at the War God's College, so we let them stay at the main peaks. Myself, Lanke, and Kenyon all stay here because we are in charge of them. The rest of our fellow apprentices are all on the other mountain peaks."

Linley nodded slightly.

Castro immediately led Linley in the direction of a different mountain peak. Linley and Castro walked up the steep mountain walls as easily as if they were travelling on flat land, their steps as graceful as flying birds.

"Castro, you are in which generation of personal disciples of the War God?" Linley asked.

"Me? I'm the 22nd personal disciple." Castro laughed.

"You've reached the peak-stage of the Saint-level by now, right?" Linley asked. When he was at the courtyard, he had heard the honorary disciples say that Castro should be on par with him. This was why Linley asked this question.

Castro nodded. "Right. But I most likely am not a match for you. Your speed is quite astonishing, on par with Olivier."

Linley was thinking nonstop.

Even the 22nd personal disciple had reached the peak-stage of the Saint-level. Then what about the earlier disciples?

“Castro, the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, is reputed to be the number one Saint in the world. Has he ever competed against your senior apprentice-brother?” Linley asked.

“No way.”

Castro let out an involuntary chuckle. “Although Haydson already has a rather high grasp and understanding of the Laws of the Earth, the War God’s College has quite a few people more powerful than him. The reason why Haydson is famous is because my senior apprentice-brother and second apprentice-brother are all over five thousand years old, and have retreated from the secular world thousands of years ago. How could they go out and compete against a junior who is only a few centuries old for the sake of fame and glory?”

Linley suddenly understood.

“Even aside from our War God’s College, I know others more powerful than him as well. For example, that King of Killers, Cesar. A thousand years ago, Cesar sparred against my senior apprentice-brother, and they were both on par with each other. I imagine if Cesar wanted to act against Haydson, he would be able to easily gain victory.” Castro said with certainty.

Linley was startled.

Cesar?

It seemed as though Castro didn’t know that Cesar had already reached the Deity-level. But for his senior apprentice-brother to have dueled Cesar to a standstill a thousand years ago meant that he was indeed an incredible person.

“We’ve arrived at Bluethunder Peak. Come. It’s been a long time since I’ve seen my senior apprentice-brother as well. Master has always said that amongst all of us disciples, senior apprentice-brother is the most likely to reach the Deity-level.” Castro’s face was filled with confidence.

Chapter 21

The mountain wind howled drearily. Walking up the mountain, Linley and Castro travelled a hundred meters with every two or three steps.

“On Bluethunder Peak, eight of us apprentice-brothers are living there. Our senior apprentice-brother is also living at the very top of Bluethunder Peak.” Castro said with emotion.

But Linley was currently thinking about that battle the eldest disciple had with Cesar a thousand years ago.”

“Castro, do you know anything about that duel between your senior apprentice-brother and Cesar?” Linley asked.

Castro said enviously, “When that duel occurred, I hadn’t been accepted into the War God’s College yet. I have, however, heard other fellow apprentices discuss it. That Cesar was extremely powerful, and he was extremely fast as well. Senior apprentice-brother’s speed is the highest amongst all of us, but he was only able to match Cesar’s speed.”

“How fast were they?” Linley was also specialized in speed.

Castro laughed calmly. “I don’t know either. After all, I didn’t personally witness this duel. But I think...they should be much faster than you and Olivier.”

Linley could understand. After all, his human form was not yet at the Saint-level. He still had a long way to grow. It was normal if he currently wasn’t a match for them.

At the top of Bluethunder Peak.

The top of the mountain had an open space that was a few dozen meters wide. There were some stunted dwarf trees at the top of the mountain as well as some wild grass. Next to one of the old dwarf trees, there were two stone houses.

And at the top of the mountain, there was a man standing there, staring downwards.

Linley carefully looked at this man. He was dressed in a simple blue robe. He was rather skinny, but his back was ramrod straight. His short hair was only three inches, and it was also blue. Just by looking at him, one could sense that this man was possessed of a valiant, resolute air.

“Senior apprentice-brother.” Castro said respectfully.

The blue-haired man turned to look at them. When his gaze landed on Linley, Linley suddenly sensed his own soul seem to tremble from the gaze.

Was this an attack?!

Linley instantly grew frightened. He was certain that against ordinary warriors, most likely the gaze alone of this senior apprentice-brother could destroy their soul. Fortunately, he himself possessed the spiritual energy of an Arch Magus of the ninth rank.

"Not bad." The man smiled and nodded. "You are Linley?"

"I am." Linley nodded as well.

"My name is Fain [Fa'en]." The man smiled. "Master instructed me to come welcome you. You drank dragon's blood in order to gain the ability to transform, I believe. You aren't a pure Dragonblood Warrior, right?"

"Hrm?" Linley frowned.

"After hearing about your Dragonform's appearance, I deduced this. I've met other Dragonblood Warriors of your Baruch clan." Fain said with a calm laugh.

"So what if I did drink dragon's blood?" Linley responded.

The eldest disciple, Fain, sighed with emotion. "Based on what I know, the Pure Dragonblood Warriors have tremendous potential, while the Variant Dragonblood Warriors who drank dragon's blood have slightly less potential. If you were a Pure Dragonblood Warrior, upon reaching the peak of your power, you would probably be able to do battle with me."

"Even the potential of a Variant Dragonblood Warrior most likely is greater than yours." Linley was very unhappy with the way this 'eldest disciple' was speaking.

Fain frowned.

He was a person of great status. Even the so-called 'most powerful Saint' in the world, the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, was nothing more than a junior in Fain's eyes, not even worthy of his attention. He truly was rather dissatisfied with the way Linley had just spoken to him.

But when he thought of the instructions the War God had given him, Fain simply smiled, no longer allowing himself to be angry.

"Indeed. Supreme Warriors, even non-pure ones, still have higher potential than normal people." Fain smiled, then glanced at the nearby Castro. "Apprentice-brother, you can go back now. For now, I will attend to Linley."

"Yes, senior apprentice-brother." Castro said very respectfully. He then looked at Linley meaningfully, signaling with his eyes for Linley to not be too arrogant. He then left the mountain.

Linley took a deep breath. He, too, understood that here at the War God's College, it was best to be a bit more humble.

"Linley, let's sit down and chat." With a wave of his hand, Fain caused two nearby wooden seats to fly over towards them, landing in front of himself and Linley.

Seeing this, Linley was extremely puzzled.

What technique had Fain used just now? Linley hadn't sensed him using any battle-qi.

"I hear that you refused Lord Hodan?" Fain laughed. Even Fain was extremely respectful towards Hodan. Hodan was, after all, a Deity-level expert.

"Indeed." Linley nodded.

"Wise." Fain laughed. "Linley, we should feel very lucky to have been born here in the Yulan continent."

"Oh?" Linley was somewhat confused.

Fain continued, "Many Saints have already been famous for centuries and have enjoyed all there is to enjoy. Most of their family members have died of old age. Without anything tying them down emotionally, a large number of them have gone to the Higher Planes."

Linley nodded. He understood this.

Eventually, one would grow weary of what the material plane had to offer. After the passage of centuries, all family members who had not reached the Saint-level would have died long ago. It was very normal for them to eventually decide to go to the Higher Planes.

"But what those people do not understand is that many of the experts of the Higher Planes wish they could come here to the plane of the Yulan continent." A hint of a smile was at the corner of Fain's lips. "Linley, five thousand years ago, many experts from different planes descended to the Yulan continent. Do you know of this affair?"

"I've heard of it." Linley nodded.

"I didn't expect you to know about this." Fain nodded. "Those countless experts all came to the Yulan continent. Naturally, it was because there was something about this plane which attracted them."

Fain shook his head and sighed. "But many Saints instead choose to run off to the Higher Planes, where experts are as common as the clouds. They give up what is close to them for something far away."

"Linley, let me just tell you this. Don't be in a hurry to go to the Higher Planes. Stay here. Eventually, you'll know what huge benefits this plane has to offer. As for what secrets lie hidden within the Yulan continent, for now, I cannot tell you." Fain said with a laugh.

Linley looked at Fain questioningly. "Why tell me this?"

Many Saints didn't know about this. Why had Fain decided to tell him?

"Master instructed me to." Fain said.

"The War God?" Linley truly didn't understand it.

This was the second time the War God had assisted him. The first time, he had ordered Emperor Johann to choose Wharton, while this time, he had Fain tell him these secrets.

Fain suddenly said, "Linley, I hear you are quite powerful. Let's spar together. What do you say?"

Linley's eyes lit up. He immediately nodded.

To train with someone on the level of Fain would definitely be beneficial. With a flip of his hand, Linley retrieved his Bloodviolet flexible sword. Leaping backwards, he retreated at high speed, while at the same time, those black scales covered his body, and those sharp, ferocious spikes appeared as well.

Staring at Linley's cold, remorseless dark golden eyes, Fain sighed in praise. "This Variant Dragonform of yours seems to be quite special. Come. Are you ready?"

Linley was already chanting the words to the Windshadow spell.

"Ready." Linley nodded.

Looking at Linley, Fain recalled his master's instructions. He couldn't help but let out a resigned sigh. The reason he actively asked Linley to spar was also at the behest of the War God.

According to the War God, it was time to let Linley have an idea as to how powerful the true experts of the continent were.

“Linley, I am extremely fast. Be careful.” Fain said with a smile. In fact, Linley had chosen to use Bloodviolet precisely because he had heard that Fain was fast.

Bloodviolet could reach an astonishing level of speed when used correctly.

“Let’s begin.” Fain’s eyes lit up.

“Swish!” An azure light suddenly flowed out from Fain’s body, so powerful that it crackled and popped.

Fain suddenly moved.

Linley only felt an azure bolt of lightning suddenly streak towards him, at least twice as fast as Olivier’s top speed. This terrifying speed rendered Linley completely unable to dodge.

“How frightening!”

Linley leapt backwards while hurriedly transforming Bloodviolet into a tornado of movement, creating countless flashes of violet light which attacked that azure bolt of lightning.

Profound Truths of the Wind – Rippling Wind!

Linley didn’t dare to use any other techniques. If he were to use the ‘Tempos of the Wind’ instead, he probably wouldn’t even be able to touch his opponent. Only by using this extremely fast technique could he just barely defend himself.

“Bam!” A terrifying force struck onto the tip of Bloodviolet.

And then, Linley could clearly sense that azure bolt of lightning seem to be transmitted through Bloodviolet towards him, striking onto his black scales.

“Bang!”

It was as though a heavy warhammer had struck Linley’s soul. Linley flew upwards, then immediately collapsed onto the floor, his entire body trembling as that azure lightning continued to ripple across Linley’s body.

His entire body felt paralyzed. Linley could sense that his muscles had lost all power, and he was barely able to remain conscious.

After a long period of time, Linley finally regained full consciousness, and his four limbs and his muscles slowly gained strength as well. Only now did Linley stand up, staring at Fain with disbelief.

When he had dueled with Olivier, Linley had believed himself to be a peak-stage Saint, which meant that there should be very few people in the continent capable of defeating him.

But now, after sparring with Fain, he realized that the difference between himself and Fain was extremely vast.

Fain was twice as fast as him. Although that didn't sound like much, when engaging in a battle of speed, even a tiny advantage in speed meant the faster party held an advantage. Twice as fast...this was an unbridgeable gap.

There was no way for him to counterattack.

What's more, that lightning-attack had stunned his very soul. Fain had actually held back from using his full power as he had not wished to injure Linley.

"What, you can't believe it?" Fain sat back down on his wooden chair, laughing.

Linley's mind was in a state of chaos. "Although I knew that you are strong, Mr. Fain, I didn't expect...I couldn't resist at all. Mr. Fain, have you reached the Deity-level?"

"No. I'm still just a peak-stage Saint." Fain shook his head.

"I'm also a peak-stage Saint. But..." Linley couldn't understand.

Laughing, Fain looked at Linley, then sighed with emotion. "Linley, don't be fooled by the four words, 'peak-stage Saint-level'. In the eyes of experts such as us, the so-called 'peak-stage' doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is how much and how well you understand the Laws."

"If you understand just the tiniest bit of the Laws, then you are a 'peak-stage' Saint in the eyes of ordinary people." Fain said disdainfully.

Linley was startled.

Right. That was indeed the case. When Linley's proficiency with the sword had reached the 'impose' level, that was merely borrowing the 'imposing force' of the heavens and the earth. It didn't have anything to do with the Laws.

But the techniques he had developed based on the Profound Truths of the Earth and the two techniques he had developed based on the Profound Truths of the Wind, the Rippling Wind and Tempos of the Wind techniques, were indeed based on what he himself knew was but a tiny bit of understanding of the Laws.

“According to what Master says, the Elemental Laws are as vast and boundless as the seas. If you’ve understood a single drop of water in those seas, you are a peak-stage Saint. If you’ve understood a hundred drops of water, you are still a peak-stage Saint. But there is a huge difference between the two!”

A hint of loneliness could be seen on Fain’s face. “The Elemental Laws truly are vast and boundless. Supposedly, only after mastering 1% of a Law can one reach the Demigod stage.”

“As for you and Olivier, you haven’t even mastered 0.01%.” Fain laughed as he glanced at Linley. “Tell me. Although both of you have gained some insights, can your insights compare with the likes of those of us who have been training for thousands of years?”

Linley understood.

No matter how much of a genius he was, he had spent less than ten years meditating on the Elemental Laws.

And Fain? He had been doing the same for thousands of years. Even if Fain wasn’t as talented as him, how could his understanding of the Laws be lower than Linley’s?

“Linley, most of the famous Saints in the world, such as that ‘Monolithic Sword Saint’ Haydson, all became famous in the past millennium. Those true experts who have been training for thousands of years are all far past the point of caring about worldly fame. All of them are meditating and training in private.”

Linley was stunned.

The Monolithic Sword Saint had the reputation of being the most powerful Saint, after all.

“Those lists and rankings that you might have heard about are nothing more than the experts which most people of the continent know about. Do you know how powerful the experts you are unaware of are? All of the lucky survivors of those battles from five thousand years ago have been in training in secret since then. I refuse to believe that they would be willing to leave the plane of the Yulan continent.” A hint of a smile was on Fain’s face.

Chapter 22

After saying these words, Fain turned and walked to the edge of the peak, allowing the wind to buffet his long robes. As for Linley, he continued to sit there, digesting what he had just learned.

From the Planar Overseer, Hodan, Linley had learned that upon reaching the Saint-level, one could leave the plane of the Yulan continent.

From Fain, Linley had learned that the Yulan continent's plane contained a major secret. The descent of those experts from other planes five thousand years ago was also related to this mystery.

Actually, it was already quite incredible that Linley had reached his current level at the tender age of twenty seven. After all, those extremely powerful experts who were training in secret here in the Yulan continent had all been training for countless years.

"Whew." Linley let out a long breath.

"Why worry about so much? As long as my little brother and I are happy, and as long as I can exterminate the Radiant Church to avenge my parents, I should feel satisfied."

Linley's current goals required that he reach a certain level of power.

As for Linley himself, he truly enjoyed the path of training.

The path of training was filled with obstacles, treacherous cliffs, and dangers. Many powerful people had lost their lives on this path. How few would actually reach the pinnacle?

In the entire Yulan continent, there were only five Deities.

Ever since embarking on this path, Linley's goal was to stand at the very pinnacle of the Yulan continent. When he had embarked on this path as a youth, Linley had mentally prepared himself for the possibility of death and failure.

"When I was six, because I was unable to train in Dragonblood battle-qi, my dream was to become a warrior of the seventh or eighth ranks. Afterwards, I not only became a Dragonblood Warrior, I also became the genius magus of the Holy Union."

"When I was young, I dreamed of eventually reaching the Saint-level. And now, I have become a peak-stage Saint."

A hint of a smile was on Linley's lips.

He had confidence.

"Fain? In the not too-distant future, I will defeat him as well." Linley felt full of excitement. The more experts he surpassed and the greater the heights he achieved, the more satisfied he felt.

What truly moved a person wasn't the results he gained, but the overcoming of setbacks and breakthroughs which one made on the path to success.

Fain turned his head, looking at Linley.

"Rest here for now. At nightfall, I will take you to see Master." Fain smiled.

"The War God?" Linley frowned.

The War God wanted to personally meet with him?

"Naturally, Master has something he wishes to discuss with you. Just train here quietly for now. If there is anything you need, you can ask me." Fain didn't want to waste any more time on Linley. He walked to a stone that had already been polished smooth by him sitting on it countless times. Seating himself in the meditative stance, he closed his eyes.

Linley stared at the meditating Fain.

"What exactly does the War God want?" Linley didn't think about it for too long, as he also sat down and began to quietly meditate.

.....

Time passed. In the blink of an eye, the sun had set.

Fain had been quietly meditating on the boulder. Suddenly, his body began to turn blurry, then disappeared from atop the boulder and reappeared next to it.

Seeing that Linley had been quietly meditating this entire time, Fain couldn't help but secretly nod.

True experts had to learn how to endure solitude.

For example, Olivier had quietly meditated by himself atop that desolate mountain for three full years. Linley, in turn, had spent three painstaking years training in the

Mountain Range of Magical Beasts. If one couldn't endure solitude, one's level of talent wouldn't make a difference.

"Linley, it is about time. Come with me to meet Master." Fain smiled.

Linley opened his eyes as well, and immediately followed Fain.

Fain walked to the side of the peak, and then began to fly downwards. Although Linley wasn't able to fly in human form, Linley leapt off the peak as well, allowing himself to gracefully drift downwards.

Based on his mastery of the wind, Linley could slow down the rate of his descent.

Soon, Fain landed at the half-way point down the mountain, and Linley landed as well.

"Come in with me." Fain headed straight for a natural tunnel. Linley felt rather puzzled. The War God actually lived in a tunnel?

The tunnel curved left and right. After a long time, it ended in that deep, bottomless pit. Looking down into it, nothing but darkness could be seen.

"Let's go down." Fain jumped down directly, and Linley followed him.

"Whoosh." "Whoosh."

The two fell down at high speed. Linley was secretly shocked. "We've definitely fallen for at least two thousand meters. We're below the ground level by now."

After falling for a long period of time, Fain and Linley gracefully floated to the ground.

And then, Linley followed Fain as they continued to move through the tunnel, but as they did, the tunnel's temperature grew higher and higher.

"What a high temperature."

Even Linley didn't dare to resist this terrifying heat with his body alone. He had to use his battle-qi to protect the soles of his feet, and even his skin and head was covered by a layer of azurish-black battle-qi.

Without the protection of his battle-qi, most likely Linley would have caught on fire.

The surrounding stone walls were all red with heat. After walking for a while, Linley saw a pitch-black stone door in front of him. Despite the extremely high

temperature, the stone door hadn't turned even the slightest bit red. Clearly, it was made from no ordinary material.

"Whoooooosh."

Gusts of hot air came from the other side of the door, carrying with it a faint, majestic presence. Faced with this majestic presence, Linley actually felt the sudden urge to bow down towards it.

"Master, I've brought Linley." Fain said respectfully.

The War God?

The War God was past this door!

Linley had previously been calm, but now, his heart couldn't help but begin to beat faster. He was actually standing in front of one of the six ultimate experts of the Yulan continent, with only a stone door separating them.

"Alright. Fain. You can leave now." A calm voice rang out.

"Yes, Master." Fain respectfully departed.

Linley still stood there, quietly waiting for the War God to address him.

"Linley. Twenty seven years old. An Arch Magus of the ninth rank who has already embarked on the path of understanding the Laws..." The War God's voice remained very calm. "Linley, you aren't bad."

Linley frowned.

He could sense that the War God's voice seemed to be causing his soul to shudder. He had the sense that if the War God was to raise his voice a little bit, it would cause his soul to dissipate and collapse.

"Thank you for your praise, War God." Linley said humbly.

"I have already instructed Fain to tell you that which you need to know. Outside the door, there is a scarlet talisman of command. Take it. From today forward, you can be considered to be someone belonging to my side." The War God said calmly.

Linley's heart shook.

Considered to be someone belonging to the War God's side?

He turned to look at the side of the door. Indeed, atop a flat rock, there was a scarlet red talisman, which slowly rose into the air and began to fly towards Linley.

Atop the talisman, a single engraved word could be seen: "War"!

"What is this War God thinking? I'll be considered as belonging to his side?" Linley felt somewhat unhappy. The War God was forcibly recruiting him without even asking or negotiating with him.

The War God's calm voice once more rang out, "Given your current level of power, you actually aren't yet qualified to receive this talisman. However...I believe you will reach that level sooner or later, which is why I am giving it to you in advance. Once you have this talisman, you will be qualified to investigate the secrets of the Yulan continent."

"The secrets of the Yulan continent?" Linley said.

"When your human form reaches the Saint-level, or...when you defeat the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, come find me again. By then, you will be qualified to know this secret. Only then would you truly be worthy of this talisman." The War God said calmly.

From the War God's words, Linley could sense a certain lonely arrogance.

In the War God's eyes, the current Linley wasn't even qualified to possess this talisman. In his eyes, Linley's power was indeed quite weak.

Linley knew his own limits as well.

"War God." Linley said respectfully. "You just said when my human form reaches the Saint-level, or when I defeat the Monolithic Sword Saint? Does that mean you, War God, feel that only after my human form reaches the Saint-level will I be able to defeat the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson?"

The War God was momentarily silent.

"That Monolithic Sword Saint is reputed to be the world's strongest Saint. Although in the eyes of those other peak-stage Saints who lie hidden throughout the world, he doesn't live up to that reputation, Haydson's current level of power can still be considered on par with those who have trained for thousands of years.

Linley understood.

“As for reaching the Saint-level in your human form...if you remain unable to defeat Haydson even after your human form reaches the Saint-level, then I will feel embarrassed on your ancestors’ behalf.” The War God said calmly.

Linley laughed.

Clearly, as far as the War God was concerned, once Linley’s human form reached the Saint-level, Linley should definitely have surpassed Haydson. But the War God seemed to currently feel that he was not yet able to overcome Haydson.

“I refuse to believe that the War God knows about the true offensive power of my ‘Profound Truths of the Earth.’” Linley said to himself.

Although the War God possessed divine power, he wasn’t omniscient.

“Linley, let me offer you a word of advice!” The War God suddenly said.

“War God, please speak.” Linley’s eyes lit up, and he immediately listened carefully. The War God had become a Deity over five thousand years ago. His advice could allow Linley to avoid many missteps.

That calm voice rang out from behind the stone door. “The Elemental Laws contain all sorts of truths. What you need to do is select a single path and follow it to its conclusion. It is best if you don’t simultaneously train in multiple paths.”

Linley was startled. The Elemental Laws were indeed quite boundless. For example, Linley was currently analyzing two aspects of the Elemental Laws of Wind. The first one was speed, the ultimate speed.

The second was in single-target sword attacks, such as his Tempos of the Wind.

“War God, why should I select just one path?” Linley asked.

“Naturally, if you so desire, you can simultaneously analyze multiple aspects of the Elemental Laws. No one can force you not to do so. Whether or not you choose to take my advice is up to you. Alright, I am finished. You can leave now.” The War God said calmly.

Linley hurriedly said, “War God, I would like to ask, what sort of power or authority does this talisman confer upon me?”

“Possessing this talisman is a symbol that you are qualified to enter the ranks of those who know the secrets of the Yulan continent. As for everything else...even if you die, I won’t get involved. You must rely on yourself.”

"Then War God, I would like to ask, right now, how many Deities exist on the Yulan continent?" Ever since meeting Fain, Linley had been wondering...

Was it possible that the Yulan continent had more than just five Deities?

"In total, there are five." The War God said calmly. "That Cesar broke through just a few years ago."

Linley felt secretly relieved.

The Yulan continent only had a few Deities standing at its peak after all.

"War God, why did you give me this talisman? Previously, why did you help my younger brother?" Linley asked. Linley had been puzzled about this the entire time. What sort of relationship did the War God have with him?

As far as Linley could tell, the War God shouldn't need anything from him.

After all, the War God was far, far more powerful than him.

"You ask too many questions."

The War God's voice turned cold. "You can go back now. For now, don't think about too many things. Focus on your training. After you defeat Haydson, or after your human form reaches the Saint-level, come find me again."

Hearing that the War God was starting to grow annoyed, Linley knew how he should act.

"War God, I bid you farewell then."

Linley immediately left. Casting the Windshadow spell, Linley flew out of the deep pit, then exited the tunnel. After exiting the tunnel and allowing the mountain wind to buffet him, Linley let out a long breath.

Despite being separated from the War God by a stone door, Linley still felt enormous pressure when speaking to the man.

"Someone belonging to his side?" Linley stared at the scarlet talisman in his hand. The scarlet talisman occasionally flashed with golden light. Linley had never seen this sort of material before.

With a flip of his hand, Linley stored the scarlet talisman into his interspatial ring, then headed down War God Mountain.

On the way down, Linley was still thinking about the War God's final bit of advice.

"The Elemental Laws contain all sorts of truths. What you need to do is select a single path and follow it to its conclusion."

His current focus was the throbbing pulse of the world.

Linley shook his head. Without thinking about it any longer, he left War God Mountain and returned to the imperial capital.

The next time Linley would return to War God Mountain, it would be after he defeated Haydson, or when his human form reached the Saint-level.

Chapter 23

Count Wharton's manor was very quiet. Zassler was in his room training, while Barker, his brothers, and Wharton were all training in the wide training yard in the back of the manor. Rebecca, Leena, and Jenne were chatting with the Seventh Princess, Nina.

"Whew."

After finishing his training, Wharton took a shower and changed into a set of clean clothes. Satisfied and content, Wharton walked into his manor. He had never felt as happy as he currently felt.

He was together with his big brother, and he was marrying Nina. Grandpa Hiri and Hillman were also enjoying the quiet, comfortable lives of nobles.

"Father. Mother. If you two were still alive, you would definitely be very happy." Wharton felt very satisfied, while at the same time, he felt very grateful to his big brother, Linley, who had brought all of this.

Linley was the pillar of the clan.

If it wasn't for Linley, would the Emperor have given Nina to him? If it wasn't for Linley, in the capital, he would only be an ordinary person amongst the nobles, at best considered a genius.

Wharton glanced at the distant Grandpa Hiri, who was reclining on a chair, idly sipping some fruit juice.

“Grandpa Hiri, where’s my big brother?” Wharton asked as he walked over.

Housekeeper Hiri looked up and smiled. “Oh, Wharton. Young master Linley left early in the morning.”

“He still isn’t back yet?” Wharton nodded.

“You have nothing to be worried about. Your big brother is a Saint. Young master Wharton, you need to train hard as well.” Housekeeper Hiri chortled.

“Right.” Wharton nodded.

“Grandpa Hiri, next month is Olivier’s duel against the Monolithic Sword Saint. Will you go watch?” Wharton laughed.

“Naturally. How could I miss a duel between two Saints?” Housekeeper Hiri’s eyes shone. “The Monolithic Sword Saint is an expert amongst Saints. This duel will definitely be exciting.”

Wharton’s eyes were also filled with excitement.

“One day, I will be like my big brother, Olivier, and Haydson.” Wharton secretly decided.

Just then, footsteps rang out.

Linley appeared outside the courtyard. Seeing his big brother, Wharton felt a warm feeling in his heart. He hurriedly went to welcome him. “Big bro, what took you so long to come back? Barker and I have finished our training. We are going to eat dinner soon.”

“I went to see some people.” Linley laughed.

Linley didn’t tell his little brother about his trip to War God Mountain. As Linley saw it, it was best not to inform his little brother about certain affairs of the Yulan continent. When his little brother reached the Saint-level, there would be plenty of time to tell him then.

Within the rear of the courtyard was Linley’s residence within the manor estate. The training grounds of the estate were extremely large, but Wharton, Barker, and his brothers all needed a great deal of space as well. Thus, Linley usually trained by himself in his own manor.

“Whoosh.” “Whoosh.” The wind blew about, scattering the fallen leaves on the floor, sending them dancing into the air. Linley’s hair gently fluttered about with the wind as well.

Linley was wielding the adamantine heavy sword, with the tip of the sword touching the ground.

“I have already managed to generate 128 pulses of the vibrational attacks of the Profound Truths of the Earth.” During the five years he had spent at Cloudpeaks Village, Linley had already mastered the Hundred Layered Waves during the fourth year.

Linley had improved quite rapidly when he had advanced from three waves to ten, then from ten to a hundred.

But after a hundred waves had been reached, Linley’s rate of improvement had begun to drop. Despite all that time having passed, Linley had only reached 128 waves.

With each breakthrough, Linley only managed to increase the number of waves by one or two.

“I wonder what the absolute limit is for the number of waves?” Linley sat down into the meditative position.

“Thruuum.” “Thruuum.”

The sound of the throbbing pulse of the world rang out within Linley’s consciousness. That unique rhythm had a miraculous cadence, capable of causing someone to unconsciously be subsumed within it.

Linley’s muscles would occasionally expand or contract as they constantly vibrated, and wind arose out of nowhere around Linley. While meditating, Linley had previously noticed that his muscles would absorb earth elemental essence at an even faster pace when they were vibrating in pace with the rhythm of the earth’s pulse, allowing his body to gain strength faster.

“Ah!”

Linley suddenly stood up, his eyes shining with terrifying light.

“The throbbing pulse of the world. The throbbing pulse of the world...” Linley had suddenly recalled that technique the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, had used to block himself and Olivier.

Haydson's body had suddenly been surrounded by layered waves of earth-colored elemental particles which had hammered against him in waves, forcing him backwards.

"Back then, I had the feeling that Haydson's defense seemed to have a very familiar quality about it. But at the time, I didn't understand it, and I didn't have time to analyze it. But now..."

Linley had a particular feeling, akin to seeing a bright moon which had been hidden behind a foggy veil gradually grow clearer in his mind.

"The throbbing pulse of the world isn't just vibrational waves. It can also become invisible, and it can also be transmitted through battle-qi." It was as though there had been an opaque film covering this realization. Having pierced through the film, Linley now began to understand.

"Using pulses for defense, haha...earth-style magic has the 'Pulsating Guard' forbidden level spell. It seems that they are based on the same principles. However, my 'Pulseguard Defense' would only be used to protect myself."

Linley's azurish-black battle-qi began to fill the area around him.

"No, that isn't how it works."

Linley shut his eyes, allowing his heart to merge with the throbbing pulse of the world, while also tuning his Dragonblood battle-qi to the same tempo. He already understood the general principles, but actually applying them wasn't a simple task.

Linley stood there in the middle of the courtyard as waves of azurish-black battle-qi suffused the area around him.

The principle was actually quite simple. For example, a sheet of paper could easily be torn apart, but if the paper was folded six times into a braid, this braid of paper might be able to support up to a hundred pounds of force.

The same material, after being folded and braided, could support far more amounts of force.

Battle-qi was the same when used for defense.

The same battle-qi, when used in different ways, could defend against ten times or even a hundred times as much incoming force. The "Throbbing Pulse of the World", in turn, was a very unique technique.

The Throbbing Pulse of the World was just one of the paths within the Laws of the Earth.

Linley had already reached a rather high level of understanding with regards to the Throbbing Pulse of the World. All he had to do now was to transform that understanding and use the same principles to create a Pulseguard Defense for himself. Since he already understood the principles, once he began to apply them, he would advance fairly quickly.

“Big bro, time to eat.” Wharton walked over, with Barker and his brothers behind him. The five of them had just finished training and then showering.

But when they pushed the door open, they discovered...

Linley was surrounded by azurish-black battle-qi, which rolled out like waves of fog. Linley was hidden within those roiling waves of azurish-black battle-qi.

“Big bro?”

“Lord?”

Wharton, Barker, and the others all looked at each other. Although training was important, resting was as well.

“Don’t bother the Boss.” Bebe, resting in the corner of the courtyard, ordered.

“It is dinner time. Big bro should take a rest.” As he spoke, Wharton headed towards Linley. Bebe and Haeru glanced at each other, but didn’t block him.

Linley had already instructed Bebe and Haeru not to go near him, as they would otherwise be injured by those waves.

“Time to let this little punk learn a lesson.” Bebe secretly said to himself.

Wharton remained cautious. The battle-qi around Linley was quite dense, but he was still fairly far away from Linley. The battle-qi here was still rather sparse. How could Wharton be truly worried about such a small amount of battle-qi?

But once he reached the edges of that azurish-black battle-qi, Wharton suddenly felt a bizarre surge of energy strike at him.

“Bang!”

Wharton was sent flying away. Wharton had the sensation of being struck dozens of times in an instant, and each time he felt as though he had been struck by a meteor.

"Wharton." Gates was the first to go forward and catch Wharton.

"Wharton, are you okay?" Gates asked.

"I'm fine." Wharton put his hand against his chest, the taste of blood in his mouth. He stared at Linley in disbelief. "Big bro is releasing his battle-qi, but I only touched the outermost perimeter. How could the power be so intense?"

Wharton didn't believe it. The battle-qi density closer to Linley was far higher, and it would most likely be far more dangerous as well.

"Wharton, his Lordship still hasn't stopped his training despite what just happened. Clearly, he must be at a critical juncture in his training. It's best if we don't disturb him." Barker said seriously.

Wharton nodded as well. "I will order the guards to prevent anyone from disturbing him."

"No need. Haeru and I will look after him." Bebe said disdainfully. "You can leave now. If the Boss doesn't finish his training, don't disturb him."

Wharton, Barker, and the others glanced at each other, then left.

At the same time, Wharton and Barker instructed everyone else not to interrupt Linley's training. That night, at dinner, Jenne, Nina, and the others were all astonished at how hard Linley was training.

"He's training so hard that he won't even eat dinner. Big lunk, your big bro really is hard working." Nina murmured.

But unexpectedly, the second day, Linley continued to train like this. The third day, the same...and just like that, one day after another went by.

In the blink of an eye, over ten days passed. May had arrived.

"In a few more days, it will be time for the duel between Olivier and Haydson. My big bro wouldn't be so caught up in his training that he will miss it, would he?" Wharton said to Barker and his brothers.

Wharton, Barker, and his brothers were all standing at the doorway to the courtyard.

Every day, after they finished their training, they would come visit Linley. Linley hadn't changed at all, and he was still surrounded by that azurish-black battle-qi. Only, compared to ten days past, that azurish-black battle-qi had actually shrunk quite a bit in area.

"I wonder how big brother's training is progressing." Wharton simply couldn't understand what he was seeing.

Barker and his brothers shook their heads as well. In terms of level of understanding, Barker and his brothers weren't much better off than Wharton, and weren't able to understand much of anything regarding the Elemental Laws.

"Whew." The sound of an exhaling breath.

Wharton and the Barker brothers, who had just turned and prepared to leave, all turned and looked back. Indeed, the azurish-black battle-qi had returned to Linley's body, and Linley was currently smiling while stretching.

"Wharton, you are here as well." Linley laughed.

"Big bro, you finally finished your training." Wharton said with excitement.

"Oh, right. Wharton, how much time have I spent in training?" Linley laughed.

"Almost fifteen days! Today is May 1st. In three days, it will be May 4th. That night, Olivier and Haydson will be dueling." Wharton said quickly.

"Fifteen days?"

Linley was slightly startled. Actually, he had been totally concentrating on sensing the 'Throbbing Pulse of the World' and constantly modifying and upgrading his Pulseguard Defense technique. He hadn't noticed time pass at all.

Unexpectedly, after closing his eyes, fifteen days had passed.

"Although I already had a high understanding of the 'Throbbing Pulse of the World' and also understood the general principles behind the Pulseguard, the actual development of the technique took fifteen days."

But Linley was actually quite satisfied.

In the past, his 'battle-qi armor' was created through the application of battle-qi in a very simple, crude manner. His current 'Pulseguard Defense' used the same amount of battle-qi, but was several dozen times stronger.

"But it seems my defense is different from Haydson's."

When he was developing his technique, Linley had thought their techniques were the same. But after developing it, Linley realized...that Haydson's defense was actually just a simple way of utilizing the 'Throbbing Pulse of the World'. Haydson's

understanding of the Throbbing Pulse of the World definitely was not as deep as Linley's own level of understanding.

However, Haydon's defense was still frightfully powerful.

This was because the 'Throbbing Pulse of the World' was just a supportive part of Haydon's defense. His true power most likely lay in a different mystery of the Laws of the Earth.

"I wonder how my pure 'Pulseguard Defense' technique matches up against Haydon's defense." Linley secretly wondered to himself.

"Big bro, what are you thinking about? Let's go eat dinner." Wharton called out.

"Alright."

Linley turned to look at Bebe and Haeru. "Bebe, Haeru, let's go." Linley could guess that Bebe and Haeru hadn't left his side during these past fifteen days.

"And here I was thinking that the Boss had forgotten about us." Bebe hopped onto Linley's shoulders, then pursed his lips. "But Boss, I've gotta say, although we haven't left the courtyard a single time during these past ten or so days, those servants still delivered food to us every day. Alas, but tonight, nobody will deliver food. I, Bebe, will have to personally go get something to eat."

Linley, Wharton, and Barker and his brothers all couldn't help but laugh.

Chapter 24

Yulan calendar, year 10009. May 4th. This night was guaranteed to be anything but an ordinary night. Many of the people of the imperial capital were unable to sleep, and instead came to the outskirts of the city. Tonight, there were no stars in the sky, nor was there a bright moon. Instead, a thick layer of clouds covered the skies.

Many citizens of the imperial capital had come with lit lanterns. In groups of three and five, they awaited the arrival of this battle.

"Hey, third brother. Where do you think Lord Olivier and Lord Haydon will hold their duel? Back then, when Lord Olivier challenged Lord Haydon, he didn't clearly specify where they would fight. Only, that they would fight outside the city. But would it be outside the east gate or the west gate, or the south gate, or the north gate?"

“Who knows? We have no choice but to quietly wait.”

This question nagged at many people. Many people had even arrived from different cities. Aside from a small number of people who were indifferent, and a number of magi, many people came. Nearly half the population of the city had come to watch this duel. When the tourists from other cities were added to their number, there were definitely millions of people here today.

People were clustered outside all four of the gates of the imperial city.

Nobody knew where the duel would take place.

A large group of people from Count Wharton’s resident had gone as well, naturally. But Linley’s group was able to easily tell where the duel was going to occur. This was because...the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, was intentionally broadcasting his aura.

The Monolithic Sword Saint and Olivier had not clearly discussed where the duel would occur.

Thus, Haydson, the Monolithic Sword Saint, had chosen to head to the Channe River, located north of the imperial capital. He stood in the air above the river, which was a wide one, measuring several hundred meters across at its widest. However, in terms of length, it could not compare to the Yulan River, and the Channe River actually joined the Yulan River at its end.

Saints were extremely sensitive to the auras of others.

If a Saint-level battle were to occur at a specific location, Saints from hundreds of kilometers away would sense it. Linley didn’t transform, because Haeru and Bebe could both clearly sense Haydson’s aura.

“Above Channe River, north of the city. Let’s go now. The duel will occur there. Lord Haydson is there.” This information swept the city like a storm, quickly spreading to the people in the south, east, and west sides of the city.

The millions of people congregating in those places swept towards the north like a flood.

The vast majority of these people went cross country towards the north. After all, there were far too many people here. If they all went by the streets of the capital, it would simply be too congested.

"There really are quite a number of people here." Linley, Wharton, Barker and the others all stared at the local scene in shock.

Over a million people were standing on each side of Channe River. The 80,000 spectators in the Colosseum had already seemed like a sea of people. These million-plus spectators truly were a terrifying sight.

Both sides of Channe River were filled with people.

The worst part of it was...

People were continuing to arrive from the east, west, and southern sides of the city. It was as though three massive deluges of water were continually adding to an already flooded area. The population of people here only continued to grow.

"So many people. Jeeze, that Olivier...why did he have to insist on the duel being three months later? If it had been half a month, the people from the other provinces wouldn't have been able to make it over. Three months...even people from the Northwest Administrative Province have made their way over." Hillman shook his head.

Zassler only snickered. "The more the merrier. What an awesome spectacle."

Zassler seemed to be treating this sight as a way to reminisce about the sight of his million-body strong army of departed souls. His million-body undead army was also an extremely incredible sight.

"More importantly, how can we get to the front? Are we going to just watch from afar?" Seeing how tightly packed the people were in front of them, Housekeeper Hiri didn't have the courage to try and squeeze through.

Gates said delightedly, "That's easy. Let us five brothers lead the way and charge forward."

Given their massive frames, they definitely were capable of pushing to the front.

"No rush. Haven't you noticed that Emperor Johann's army has arrived?" Linley laughed. Indeed, just at this moment, the soldiers from the army had formed an orderly regiment and were marching in their direction.

There were millions of ordinary commoners here, and less than a hundred thousand soldiers.

But due to their tight formations and gleaming armor, the soldiers were able to awe and suppress the hearts of the commoners.

“Rooooaaaar!” “Groooooowl.”

The millions of spectators had magical beasts in their ranks as well, some of which had been tamed by powerful experts. The cries of magical beasts could be heard as well, alongside the unceasing chatter of the humans.

It was a scene of utter chaos.

“SILENCE!”

A powerful voice rang out. “Everyone who is on a boat on Channe River, all of you, get to land, quickly! If you are on the river during Lord Haydson and Lord Olivier’s battle, it is highly likely that your boats will be swamped by waves. People on the shores of Channe River, all of you move backwards by ten meters! Nobody is permitted to go near the shores of the river. The army will maintain order here!”

The imperial army began to organize the viewers.

The upper echelons of the Empire didn’t dare to be careless. If something were to happen here, with millions of citizens present, it could be disastrous. A duel between two Saints was a joyous occasion. They couldn’t let it turn into a tragedy.

“Lord Wharton, Lord Linley, please come with us.” Two soldiers walked over to them.

Linley and Wharton grinned at each other.

Emperor Johann had already made arrangements early on. After having those spectators retreat by ten meters, the nobles of the Empire headed to the front, although they also didn’t go to the edges of the shores. With the Channe River spanning several hundred meters, there was plenty of space for the two Saints to duel.

In addition, both of the Saints were dueling in mid-air.

The nobles, based on their prearranged spots, lined up along the banks of Channe River. Having the best viewing locations, they prepared to watch this incredible spectacle. The commoners of the Empire, seeing this, actually weren’t angry.

There was a huge gap between the worlds of the nobles and the commoners.

Those who were able to become nobles were all people of talent, or who had rendered great merit to the nation. As long as you had ability, you could become a noble. The commoners of the Empire actually held the nobles in great admiration, and they too wished to become nobles.

The night wind was very cold, especially close to the river banks. The cold night wind caused many nobles to put on cloaks.

On each side of the river, there were countless lit torches, illuminating the entire Channe River. However, in the air above Channe River, the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, stood there in mid-air alone. Olivier had yet to appear.

"Master Linley, why hasn't Olivier appeared yet?" Emperor Johann said to Linley, who was now by his side.

Emperor Johann had personally requested that Linley be seated next to him. The first reason was because he wanted to strengthen his relationship with Linley. The second was because with Linley by his side, he would be a bit safer while watching these two Saints duel.

"Don't be impatient, your Imperial Majesty." Linley smiled. "Haydson himself is still patiently waiting. Your Imperial Majesty, you just need to quietly wait."

"True." Emperor Johann smiled and nodded.

In the air above Channe River, the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson stood, dressed in his simple gray robes, and carrying that earth-colored heavy sword on his back. His eyes were shut.

Suddenly...

Haydson opened his eyes and stared to the east. A human blur was flying through the air at high speed. In the blink of an eye, a second human figure had arrived in the air above Channe River.

It was Olivier, with his Lightshadow sword and the obsidian sword on his back. Today, Olivier was dressed in a long black robe. He looked very mysterious, and his white-streaked hair was flowing freely in the breeze.

"Lord Olivier has arrived!"

The millions who had been impatiently waiting suddenly let out an explosive shout of joy, filling the heavens like a physical wave of sound, causing the waters of

Channe River to vibrate. One can imagine how loud millions of joyfully shouting voices were.

“Such a large number of people is really frightening.” Wharton sighed in amazement.

Linley chuckled.

In the air above them, Olivier and Haydson hadn’t been impacted in the slightest. They stared at each other in mid-air, with Olivier absolutely radiating an aura of battle.

“Haydson, there is no way I will hold back in our duel today. If I accidentally kill you, you can’t blame me.” Olivier said coldly.

The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, laughed calmly as he glanced at Olivier. “If you can kill me, then kill me. I definitely won’t blame you.”

These words from these two powerful Saints excited all the spectators to the point of trembling. Good heavens, was this going to be a life-and-death duel between two powerful Saints?

This duel between two Saints was not a duel between ordinary Saints. One was reputed to be the most powerful Saint in the world, the Monolithic Sword Saint. The other was the Prodigy Sword Saint, who had come today to avenge his humiliating defeat of six years ago. This battle had filled everyone with excitement.

After countless voices called out in excitement, everyone fell silent!

Millions of people were present, but not a single person made any noise. The only thing that could be heard was the rustling of animals in the grass and the ceaseless blowing of the wind.

“Today, I have to get a good look at these two.” Linley’s eyes were as sharp as lightning, and what’s more, the surrounding wind also served as his eyes. Despite the dark night, he could clearly ‘see’ everything going on in the air between these two people who stood in mid-air several hundred meters above.

According to what the War God had said, if Linley was capable of defeating Haydson, that would mean he was qualified to know the secrets of the Yulan continent’s plane. Haydson was also a practitioner of the Laws of the Earth. Naturally, Linley would carefully observe this battle.

As for Olivier...Linley had the sense that Olivier would also be a very powerful rival.

Not just Linley.

Blumer, Kenyon, Castro, Lanke, and other personal disciples of the War God had come over to watch this duel as well. After all, given Haydson's power, even in the War God's College, only those disciples who had trained for thousands of years were capable of defeating him.

"Six years ago, I wasn't a match for you at all. But today..." Olivier laughed coldly as he drew the pitch-black obsidian sword from his back.

"You are starting off with the obsidian sword?" Haydson smiled slightly, but then his face slowly grew solemn. He didn't move at all, nor did he draw his sword.

Olivier's face turned cold.

"Oh? Six years ago, you didn't draw your sword. Today, you still think you won't need to draw your sword in order to defeat me?" Olivier said coldly.

"If you have the ability, then force me to draw my sword." Haydson said calmly. At the same time, a rippling wave of earth-colored battle-qi surrounded Haydson, causing him to seemingly be ensconced in a wave of earth.

The two were separated by hundreds of meters of distance. Naturally, they spoke very loudly.

All the millions of spectators could clearly hear their words. They were stunned. The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, was so arrogant that he didn't even draw his sword.

"This Haydson probably doesn't know that Olivier's obsidian sword includes a spiritual attack component alongside the physical attack." Linley didn't say anything.

For Haydson to dare act in such a way meant that he probably had reason to be confident. Linley actually didn't desire Haydson to be killed by Olivier in one stroke. That would be too laughable.

A dream-like burst of white light flashed across the sky. With each streak of white light, an additional Olivier appeared in the sky. In the blink of an eye, 108 Oliviers appeared in mid-air.

"Using a technique like this? Olivier, can it be that you don't know that these techniques are useless against me?" Haydson stood there calmly in mid-air, ensconced by his earthen aura.

“Truly?”

Olivier laughed coldly. The strange thing was, those 108 Oliviers all moved at the same instant, charging towards the Monolithic Sword Saint at the same time.

Haydson stood there, occasionally taking a single step.

One step forward, one step back, left one step, right one step...each movement was simple, but every single step allowed him to instantly travel several dozen meters, easily dodging every single one of Olivier’s attacks.

In terms of speed, Haydson wasn’t the slightest bit slower than Olivier.

“Are you only capable of dodging?” Olivier shouted angrily.

“Even if I were to fight you head on, what would you be able to do?” Haydson’s calm voice rang out, then he returned to his original position, and then he actually retracted that earthen aura, allowing it to cling on his body.

“Whoosh!”

Those 108 Oliviers all combined into one. Olivier’s body was covered by a gloomy, cold black light which seemed to devour all the light surround him. Olivier’s face couldn’t be clearly seen.

“Hrm?” Linley was surprised.

The wind elemental essence couldn’t even get near Olivier.

“Swish!”

A ray of devouring black light tore through the sky, striking directly at Haydson. Haydson stood there without moving, just using a simple punch to strike at it with his right fist...

“Bam!” A sonic boom could be heard.

That fist smashed down with the weight of a mountain, locking the surrounding air in place.

“Boom!”

Olivier finally appeared, his obsidian sword having chopped against Haydson’s fist. When Haydson had punched out, Olivier actually hadn’t tried to dodge, instead clashing his sword directly against it. That terrifying force from the punch passed

through the obsidian sword, and with a terrifying splintering sound, Olivier's right arm contorted bizarrely, and he was knocked flying away by the power of that fist.

As for Haydson, he simply stood there, not moving.

"Haydson...seems to be in trouble." Linley carefully watched Haydson.

Chapter 25

"Splash!"

Olivier fell from the skies, slamming down into the waters of the river and kicking up an enormous geyser of water.

"Elder brother!" Blumer, who had been watching at the riverbank, roared loudly, while at the same time charging directly towards the location in the water where Olivier had fallen.

The millions of spectators were simply too numerous. Many of the people at the distant edges couldn't even see Olivier and the Monolithic Sword Saint do battle. They could only overhear what the people in front were saying about what had just happened. Instantly, the millions of onlookers began to murmur.

The difference between the two was simply too enormous!

After all, Haydson continued to stand there, as though he hadn't been injured at all.

"Master Linley, Olivier lost?" Emperor Johann said questioningly to Linley, by his side.

"It is still too early to come to any conclusion." Linley was still staring up at the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, who remained unmoving in mid-air. Linley said to himself, "I wonder what the results are for Haydson, after he took on that attack head on."

The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, was feeling extremely uncomfortable right now.

He was extremely confident in his defense. He had roamed the Yulan continent for centuries now, and had never discovered anyone whose defense was stronger than his. Indeed, the obsidian sword's battle-qi attack just now hadn't breached his defense in the slightest.

However...

When the obsidian sword had struck against his fist, a strange energy had easily penetrated past his vaunted defense and directly attacked his spirit, catching him off guard and stabbing viciously into his soul.

He felt dizzy, and his head hurt so much it threatened to split apart.

"What a Prodigy Sword Saint. He's even managed to develop a soul attack technique." After a moment, Haydson regained his normal faculties. "A young fellow who isn't even a half-century old was actually able to develop such a unique attack."

Haydson had tasted this sort of attack long ago!

Soul attacks actually weren't that unique.

For example, that 'eldest disciple' of the War God, Fain, which Linley had met, had caused Linley to nearly faint when his lightning technique struck Linley. It had taken Linley quite a while to recover. This, too, was a form of soul-based attack.

For example, the War God, who simply by speaking could cause someone's soul to shudder.

The basic principle underlying soul-based attacks was quite simple; it was using one's spiritual energy to form an attack, then use it against the opponent's soul.

Simply put, it was a spiritual attack.

But although it was easy in theory, it was extremely difficult to do in practice. This was because spiritual energy, normally speaking, was very soft and malleable, like cotton. In order to do a spiritual attack, one had to transform the cotton into a sharp knife and use it to pierce the opponent's soul.

Even most Saints were only able to, at most, broadcast their spiritual energy. To use it to attack? To transform cotton into a knife?

Difficult!

But although it was difficult, those top-level experts who had been meditating on the Elemental Laws for a long time were capable of reaching that level. Haydson had previously experienced this sort of soul-based attack.

"Olivier's spiritual energy is not very strong. Most likely, it is only on the level of a magus of the eighth rank. If he had the spiritual energy of an Arch Magus of the

ninth rank, I would most likely be badly injured. If it was on the level of a Grand Magus Saint..." Haydson laughed calmly.

And then, Haydson looked down into the Channe River.

The Channe River had already regained its usual calm, but Olivier hadn't reappeared yet.

"Olivier, it seems you won't come out until you've finished repairing your arm." Haydson laughed loudly, his voice shaking the heavens and reverberating throughout the land.

"Repairing his arm?" Linley frowned, feeling surprised.

"Splash!"

A waterspout suddenly erupted from the river, and a black blur instantly shot up into the sky, once more standing in mid-air and staring at Haydson. Olivier's damaged, twisted right arm had already returned to its normal condition.

Olivier laughed coldly as he looked at Haydson. "Repairing an arm? Haydson, even if you wanted to do such a thing, you wouldn't be able to."

"Light-style elemental essence is indeed miraculous. Some top-grade light-style magi are able to heal even the most grievous of wounds in an instant. However...in terms of defense and attack, the Laws of Light are inferior to the Laws of the Earth." Haydson said confidently.

The Laws of the Earth.

Linley, too, trained in the Laws of the Earth.

"How can you possibly understand the subtle mysteries of the Laws of Light?" Olivier said calmly. "Haydson, don't be over-confident. You didn't enjoy the feeling of my sword attack just now, did you?"

Haydson frowned.

Even an extremely powerful soul, upon receiving a soul-based attack, would suffer some wounds.

"With your soul damaged, will you be able to use 100% of your power?" Olivier drew his Lightshadow sword with his left hand.

He wielded his obsidian sword with his right hand, and his Lightshadow sword with his left.

“But I’m different. My arm was broken, but now it is healed. I’m not impacted in the slightest.” Olivier dual-wielded his weapons, with a layer of dazzling white light covering his Lightshadow sword, while a layer of light-devouring cold black aura covered his obsidian sword.

Two diametrically opposite forces.

“I want to see how you will deal with these two totally opposite forces!” Olivier’s eyes flashed with a cold look, and then he instantly transformed into a blaze of white light, as radiant as the sun, while at the same time, an unremarkable series of black lights flashed amidst his radiance.

His speed suddenly increased to his utmost limit!

The skies were once again filled with over 108 Oliviers.

“Clang!” Haydson, his face solemn, drew his earthen-colored heavy sword from his back.

“Haha...you’ve finally drawn your sword.” Olivier’s laughter shook the heavens. The countless spectators were all silent.

Tonight, the night sky was covered by thick clouds, giving the battlefield a very gloomy aura. The spectators below even had the feeling that those dark, thick clouds were so close to Olivier and Haydson that the two could touch the clouds just by raising their hands up.

“Boom!” “Boom!”

Terrifying sonic booms could be heard, as each time Olivier streaked through the sky at high speed, there would be an eardrum-rupturing sonic boom. The power of those sonic booms in the sky was so great that even those lit torches wavered, the flames pressing downwards from the pressure.

Gales of wind caused everyone’s hair to begin to float upwards.

Countless people stared fixedly at this spectacle, hoping they could clearly see what was happening in the skies.

“Clang!” “Clang!”

Each time Olivier's dual swords clashed against Haydson's earthen-colored heavy sword, those two light-style and darkness-style bursts of energy would strangely combine and attack together, seeking to break through Haydson's attack.

"I didn't expect Olivier to have this sort of attack!" Watching the battle with his head raised, Linley sighed secretly.

He had to admit that Olivier was a genius. Light and Darkness were two diametrically opposed types of Elemental Laws, but Olivier not only was able to train in both at the same time, he was also able to use them together in a very perfect manner.

"Haha..."

With each consecutive blow, Olivier's loud laughter rang out. "Haydson, what, are you just going to defend? Can it be that your soul is so wounded that you can't even attack?"

"BOOM!"

A terrifying thunderclap could suddenly be heard from the cloud-covered skies as an enormous bolt of lightning snaked down and struck the ground. A few seconds later, a torrential rain began to fall.

In the blink of an eye, the world was covered with rain.

"Damnit, why does it have to rain now?" The millions of spectators began to curse aloud. Most people had not brought any rain gear. With the rain suddenly descending upon them, they were transformed into a series of half-drowned chickens. However, these spectators continued to raise their heads high, staring at the duel in the skies.

But thanks to the torrential rain, they couldn't even fully open their eyes as they stared upwards.

How miserable!

Many people were forced to take off their clothes and try to use their clothes to block some of the rain, so as to allow themselves to continue to stare upwards at this duel between absolute experts, which they might not have the chance to see again in a hundred years. But despite this...the thick, heavy rain prevented them from seeing much of the battle in the skies.

Right now, there were very few people who could clearly see what was going on in the skies.

Linley, of course, was one of them.

“Master Linley, what is going on in the duel above?” Emperor Johann asked Linley urgently. The imperial clan was still quite comfortable, because as soon as the rain had started, many large umbrellas were immediately deployed above them.

Linley and the others all continued to sit comfortably dry under those umbrellas.

“Your Imperial Majesty, Haydson continues to defend, while Olivier is wildly attacking him. However...it seems Olivier is totally unable to harm Haydson.” Linley smiled.

But although that was what he said, in his heart, Linley was wondering to himself, “Every single one of Olivier’s attacks contains a spiritual attack component. What sort of shape is Haydson in, exactly?”

The torrential rain continued to fall.

Those countless torches had been extinguished by the rain long ago. Right now, only the illuminating spells of a few light-style magi provided a bit of illumination in the area.

“Olivier, are you finished attacking?” Haydson said calmly.

“What?!” Olivier was suddenly stunned.

Could it be that despite him having attacked for so long, he hadn’t been able to injure Haydson at all? His soul-based attack was his secret weapon.

Wielding both swords in his hands, Olivier stood in mid-air, staring at Haydson.

Haydson looked calmly at Olivier. “When I received your first soul-based attack, I was indeed injured, but afterwards, since I was prepared for them, your attacks weren’t able to harm me at all.”

“Prepared?” Olivier was stunned.

How would one defend against a soul-based attack? Even Olivier himself had no idea.

“Olivier, you must understand, although soul-based attacks are special, you aren’t the only one to use them. There have been quite a number of people in the history of

the Yulan continent who have developed soul-based attacks, and I have tasted these attacks before as well. You are only a warrior, after all. Your spiritual energy is far too weak. Most likely, you are only at the level of a magus of the eighth rank. If you were at the ninth rank...then perhaps I would be injured even if I prepared for your attacks. If that were the case my victory today wouldn't be this easy."

The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, looked calmly at Olivier.

"What?!" Olivier found it difficult to accept this.

This was an unbelievably heavy blow to him!

"Olivier, you are already quite impressive, to have reached this level before even a half century of life." Haydson gently stroked the earthen-colored heavy blade in his hands. "Now, prepare to receive my most powerful attack. Consider this my way of showing respect for your power. As to whether you will live or die, that will be up to heaven."

Olivier felt that this was very laughable.

Whether he would live or die?"

"Haydson, don't be too arrogant. If you have the ability to do so, then come and kill me. Enough talk." Olivier's body once more began to blaze with that brilliant white light, intermixed with that dark black light.

Half his body was covered with pure white light. The other half, pitch black.

"Come!" Olivier's black and white hair flowed freely in the air. He radiated light in every direction, and the power of those two swords in his hands reached a crescendo as well.

Wielding his earthen-colored heavy sword in one hand, the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, had a smile on his face.

"This is my most powerful attack. The name of the attack is... 'Worldbreaker'. If you are to die, I wish you to die with full knowledge of what killed you!" Haydson had already forgotten how many so-called geniuses had died to him.

Was Olivier the sixth, or the seventh?

He had forgotten.

But Haydson knew that if a genius were to die, then they would no longer be a genius.

"Elder brother!" Blumer roared mightily into the skies. "Be careful!" Tears streamed down from Blumer's eyes, but given the torrential rain, no one could tell if they were tears or just raindrops.

Although the torrential rain was thunderously loud, powerful experts were still able to clearly hear the words between these two combatants.

Hearing his younger brother's shout, ensconced in black and white light, the corner of Olivier's lips actually tugged upwards, forming a perfect curve. Surrounded by black and white light, Olivier was very dazzling to the eye. To the below spectators, Olivier seemed to be a bright star shining in the night rain.

"Boom!"

Olivier suddenly moved, and a terrifying sonic boom could be heard as he transformed into a dazzling line of light which streaked towards the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson.

"Haaaaaaaargh!" Haydson let out a loud yet calm shout.

The Lightshadow sword and the obsidian sword seemed to have merged together, and the dark light and the white light crackled and swirled together, as Olivier, his face fierce, viciously swung down both swords at close range for one final blow...

But as Haydson swung his giant earthen sword towards him, it seemed to carry the power to shatter the entire world.

"BAAANG!"

A terrifying loud collision sound could be heard, as though the world itself had exploded. At the same time, a terrifying gust of hurricane-like wind blasted in every direction as the torrential rain fell down in sheets, carried by the force of that blast of wind.

"Splash!" A human figure covered with dim black and white light fell at high speed into the Channe River...and on the surface of the Channe River, a large amount of a red colored liquid could be seen.

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In turn, Haydson's body had been knocked flying far away at high speed by this terrifying clashing force. Only after flying backwards for nearly a hundred meters

did Haydson stabilize himself, and a hint of blood leaked out from Haydson's mouth.

Haydson wiped the blood away, staring down at the Channe River.

"What a fine Prodigy Sword Saint. His final attack truly was powerful." Haydson murmured to himself. At a do or die moment, Olivier's final attack had reached a new level of power, and had actually broken through Haydson's defense and struck Haydson's body, causing him to be injured.

"Rumble." The torrential rain continued to fall nonstop, and on the surface of Channe River, the waves of water roiled about. Quickly, that 'scarlet red' color atop the surface of the river dissipated and disappeared from sight.

A deathly silence!

Everyone had fallen silent, and the people at the two banks of the river stared into the Channe River. Everyone wanted to know, had that glorious Prodigy Sword Saint died, just like that?

"Elder brother!" Blumer didn't hesitate at all. Shedding bitter tears of pain, he threw himself directly into the turbid waters of the Channe River.

"Master Linley, did Olivier die?" Emperor Johann was worried.

Linley shook his head. "I'm not sure either." As he spoke, Linley lowered his head to glance at Bebe, who looked upwards at Linley with resignation. "Boss, Olivier's aura is extremely weak right now, and he isn't even breathing. I can only detect the barest hint of life in him. It seems he really is about to die."

The countless spectators were all discussing this situation in hushed tones, wondering if Olivier had truly died. But everyone still remembered...Olivier's dazzling final blow.

"Plop!" Water sprayed everywhere.

Carrying a body, Blumer rushed out of the water. Linley could instantly tell that Olivier's face was drained of all blood and was totally white, and his lips were ashen as well. He was no longer breathing.

Only by using spiritual essence to probe him could one sense that Olivier was still alive.

"Move, move!" Carrying the Lightshadow sword, the obsidian sword, and his older brother Olivier in his arms, Blumer charged directly towards the direction of Emperor Johann.

Blumer's eyes were filled with tears.

"Your Imperial Majesty, your Imperial Majesty, where are the healers? Quick, quick!" Blumer shouted frantically.

For this battle, Emperor Johann had prepared in advance for the most exalted Arch Magus of light magic of the ninth rank in the palace to come.

"Mr. Anders [An'te], quick, save Olivier." Emperor Johann immediately said.

A silver-haired old man immediately walked out from behind Emperor Johann and hurried towards Olivier's prone body. His hands glowing with white light, he touched Olivier's body. Soon, color began to quickly reappear in Olivier's face.

"How is he? How is my older brother?" Blumer said frantically.

Although Blumer was very stubborn and very cold towards others, in Blumer's heart, he loved Olivier like a father. His older brother had raised him ever since he was young. To Blumer, there was nobody more important than his older brother.

"Don't be hasty. Just now, all I did was heal the simpler wounds Lord Olivier has sustained. I need to use more healing magic to address his internal injuries." The silver haired old man nodded as he spoke, then immediately began to mumble the words to a magic spell. Blumer watched, feeling anxious and nervous, but he didn't dare to interrupt the work of this light-style Arch Magus.

Soon...

A starry light entered Olivier's body, and the wounds on Olivier's body began to rapidly heal. The efficacy of this healing magic was quite astonishing.

"Hrm?" The silver haired old man shook his head, puzzled.

"What is it?" Blumer asked frantically.

The silver haired old man shook his head, frowning. "Lord Olivier's body has been totally healed. His external injuries, his organs, and his broken bones are all restored. But Lord Olivier didn't wake up. This..."

Linley was carefully inspecting Olivier as well.

"Olivier's soul has been wounded." Bebe said mentally to Linley. "I can feel that his spirit is extremely weak right now."

Just at this moment, the gray-robed Haydson flew over slowly from the sky, agilely and gracefully coming to a halt in front of Emperor Johann.

"Haydson!" Blumer stared hatefully at Haydson.

His one and only older brother, his one and only family member. Blumer felt boundless hatred towards Haydson. If it wasn't for the fact that he was far weaker than him, Blumer probably would've charged straight for him.

"Stop staring at me. Your older brother's spirit was heavily wounded, and he is hovering at the point of life and death, but that isn't because of me. When executing his final attack, your older brother seemed to utilize some sort of forbidden technique to attack me, hoping to take me down with him." Haydson's face was rather pale as well.

"Forbidden technique?" Blumer frowned.

Suddenly, he remembered...

A while ago, he wanted to learn the obsidian sword technique from his elder brother, but Olivier had instructed to focus on learning the Lightshadow sword technique, and not to train in the diametrically opposite obsidian sword technique.

"Could it be that there really is some sort of taboo preventing people from utilizing two diametrically opposite Elemental Laws at the same time?" Blumer lowered his head to stare at his older brother.

Olivier's face was ruddy, and his body was clearly in peak condition. But he still didn't wake up, and his spiritual aura was extremely weak, as though it could be extinguished at any moment.

"Lord Olivier lost?"

"His brother carried his corpse out. Alas, the Prodigy Sword Saint has died."

"Who said he died? Maybe he's just unconscious due to his injury."

"No matter what happened, Lord Haydson, the Monolithic Sword Saint, seems to be fine, and even flew down from the skies. Clearly, he is far stronger than Lord Olivier."

Those millions of spectators were all discussing this battle. Although the skies were filled with torrential rain, it couldn't douse their burning ardor. Everyone was filled with excitement at what they had just seen. Regardless of whether Olivier was dead or just passed out from his injuries, one thing was certain...

The victor of this duel was the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson!

This result was one which the vast majority had predicted. After all, Haydson had been famous for too long, and was reputed to be the most powerful Saint alive. He had never been defeated. It was very normal for him to be the victor of this duel.

Everyone would've been stunned if Haydson had lost.

The flood of spectators slowly began to melt away. Many began to head towards the imperial capital, while others headed towards some villages on the outskirts of the city.

The people slowly left, but the soldiers still stood guard.

"My elder brother won't die." Blumer said coldly. And then, carrying his elder brother's body, he ordered his servants to carry the Lightshadow and obsidian swords and follow him. Blumer left, carrying his older brother in his arms.

"I hope Olivier can make it past this disaster." Emperor Johann sighed. Right now, Emperor Johann was surrounded by over a thousand people.

These people were all nobles. Many of them wished to know if Olivier was alive or dead.

"Lord Haydson truly is powerful. Once again, he won easily." A distant noble's voice rang out respectfully. Haydson laughed calmly.

And then Haydson looked at Linley. With a loud laugh, he said, "Actually, compared to Olivier, I'd rather have a competition against Master Linley."

A stunned silence.

Everyone was shocked. Haydson had just completed a major duel with Olivier, and now he wanted to challenge Linley to a duel?

Linley was silent for a moment, then spoke. "Haydson, what do you mean by this?"

Haydson smiled. "Last time at the Colosseum, you and Olivier didn't finish your duel, but Olivier had drawn his obsidian sword, and you had prepared your

adamantine heavy sword. I remember at that time, you had said that your adamantine heavy sword techniques were based on the Laws of the Earth, right?"

"Indeed." Linley nodded.

"I, too, am a person who studies the Laws of the Earth. I imagine that if we were to engage in a competition, it would be of great benefit to both of us in our attempts to break through to a higher level of understanding." Haydson looked at Linley.

"Linley, I'd like to invite you to spar. Would you accept?"

Neither the surrounding nobles nor Emperor Johann dared to make a sound.

One was reputedly the strongest Saint alive. The other was a Saint who was a genius the likes of which the world had never seen.

"Big brother..." Wharton couldn't help but speak out.

Linley turned to glance at his little brother. He chuckled.

Wharton, in his heart, was frantic and angry. He thought to himself, "This Haydson really is despicable. He just finished beating Olivier to the brink of death. Does he now want to kill my big brother as well? Is it because he saw both my big brother and Olivier are both geniuses, and are afraid that in the future, they would threaten his status?"

Wharton wasn't the only person thinking this. Many of the people present were thinking this as well.

After all, Linley and Olivier were both dazzling geniuses. One had been beaten to the point where whether or not he would survive was at question. And now, Haydson invited Linley to spar? Many people naturally questioned his real motives.

"What, you refuse?" Haydson asked with a laugh.

Linley looked at Haydson, a smile on his face. "Name a time, and name a place?"

Haydson was startled.

He immediately understood that this meant Linley was accepting his challenge. "I've already competed today against Olivier and am not in peak form. How about this. Three months from now, on August 4th, in the air above Mt. Tujiao, east of the city. Let's have our competition there."

"Fine." Linley smiled and nodded.

Linley wanted to duel with Haydson as well. He had just begun to understand this Pulseguard Defense technique. Combining that with his 'Profound Truths of the Earth' attack, Linley didn't think that he would be easily defeated. After all, he not only was protected by the Pulseguard Defense, he also was protected by his draconic scales. With such powerful defenses, most likely it would be hard to say if Haydson's was better or his own was better.

"Since this is the case, then your Imperial Majesty, Linley, I'll bid you farewell." Haydson nodded to each of them, then transformed into a gray streak of light as he flew away into the sky.

"Big bro..." Wharton ran over frantically.

"I'm fine. Victory and defeat is yet to be determined." Linley smiled confidently, and then he led his people back towards their residence.

As for those nobles and the members of the imperial clan, they were all engaged in endless speculation. After a while though, all of them returned back to the imperial capital as well under the cover of rain.

The Channe River once more regained its normal peacefulness. Only the mess left behind at the riverbanks gave testament to the earlier excitement.

.....

At the place where the Channe River and the Yulan River intersected, a six story tall enormous ship was sailing from the Yulan River into the Channe River. A row of knights were standing in a neat row on the deck.

Many of those powerful knights had magical beasts as well. Ordinary people did not have access to magical beasts; for so many of the knights to have magical beasts meant that the status of the person on this ship was quite extraordinary.

"When we arrive at the Channe River, we'll be only three days out from the imperial capital of the O'Brien Empire. Unfortunately, we'll have missed the duel between the Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier, and Lord Haydson."

The warriors on the ship's deck were chatting amongst each other.

Right at this time, a man with white streaked hair came out onto the top deck. He seemed to be a middle-aged man in his forties or fifties. By his side was a brown-furred bear that looked charmingly naïve. This bear was roughly as tall as a person was, and seemed very cute.

"Growl. Growl. Master. I really don't feel comfortable here on the water. Let's fly instead." That charmingly naïve seeming bear said to the middle-aged man.

"I know you hate water." The middle-aged man laughed as he walked to the chain linked side of the boat, staring down into the waves.

"Your Honor." Seeing the middle-aged man, the soldiers on the ship deck all said respectfully. Just at this time, a tall, golden-haired beautiful woman came walking out with a smile. Laughing, she headed towards the middle-aged man. "Teacher, we've already arrived at the Channe River. We should be arriving at the O'Brien Empire soon."

The middle-aged man laughed as he glanced at the golden-haired woman. "Haha. Indeed we are. Delia, I think you are even more impatient than I am."

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That adorable looking bear laughed as well. "Right, right. As soon as Delia knew that Linley fellow was here, she immediately started scheming to come as well."

"Big Yellow, do you want to die?" Delia grabbed the big bear by his ear.

"It doesn't hurt. Haha. It doesn't hurt." The big bear said delightedly.

"Hrmph." Delia wrinkled her nose and pouted. "Big Yellow, I know you are powerful, alright? You are a Worldbear and you have thick skin. You aren't afraid of me twisting your ears." As she spoke, she walked over to stand next to the middle-aged man and ignored the bear.

The big bear rubbed its head, said in a deep, adorable voice, "Delia, don't be angry. It was my mistake, alright?"

Delia looked at him and started to laugh.

"Hatton [Ha'dun], Delia is just teasing you. She won't get angry that easily." The middle-aged man said with a calm laugh, and then he turned to stare at the skies. "Parry [Pa'lei] is coming back."

From the skies, a hawk with wingspan of five or six meters came swooping towards the ship at high speed. This hawk was extremely fast, and it seemed to move at the speed of lightning. Its eyes were golden, and it had a crest of blue feathers atop its head. It appeared very fierce.

This was a magical beast of the ninth rank – the Wildthunder Stormhawk.

The soldiers on the ship did not attempt to block it. Clearly, they recognized this Wildthunder Stormhawk, which flew directly towards and landed next to Delia and the others.

“Little Wind, did you catch anything?” Delia devotedly rubbed the head of the Wildthunder Stormhawk.

Retracting its wings, the Wildthunder Stormhawk stood up, rising to its full height of 2 meters high. Right now, the Wildthunder Stormhawk was enjoying Delia’s attention, closing its eyes as Delia continued stroking its head.

“Parry, get over here.” The big bear said unhappily.

The Wildthunder Stormhawk glanced at the big bear, then obediently moved over to it. The Worldbear was a Saint-level magical beast, and an extremely powerful type at that.

Actually, both the Worldbear as well as the Wildthunder Stormhawk were the magical beast companions of that middle aged man, a Saint-level Grand Magus of the Yulan Empire, Longhaus [Long’er’si].

Master Longhaus was a wind-style Grand Magus.

Wind-style Grand Magi were extremely terrifying. When Longhaus had brought his Wildthunder Stormhawk into the Mountain Range of the Setting Sun, he had used the Dimensional Edge spell to heavily injure this Worldbear.

The offensive power of the Dimensional Edge spell was simply too terrifying. It cut through the walls of reality itself.

Against this sort of attack, even a peak-stage Saint such as Haydson could be split into two halves. In addition, wind-style Grand Magi could control the wind to a terrifying degree, and could also move extremely quickly.

It could easily be said that, given enough time, a Grand Magus Saint could easily defeat a Saint-level warrior. But Saint-level warriors were no fools either. Thus, most Grand Magi Saints would work hard to acquire a Saint-level magical beast.

Alas, capturing Saint-level magical beasts was simply too difficult.

Delia stood atop the ship's deck, fiddling with her necklace as she stared to the east. A gentle wind blew, stirring her hair. She was a very beautiful, moving sight. Even those warriors off to the side couldn't help but stare at her and feel moved.

Delia had become extremely famous in the Yulan Empire. She was a genius who had reached the seventh rank as a magus at the young age of 22. In addition, she had an extremely powerful clan behind her, and had been accepted as an apprentice by the Saint-level Grand Magus, Longhaus. In terms of appearance, she could definitely rank in the top ten of the imperial capital as well. Such a glorious, outstanding girl definitely had many suitors and paramours.

But unfortunately, Delia had refused every single one of them.

Because of her clan and because she had grown up in the imperial capital, Delia was extremely eloquent and very astute in judging the intentions of others. Ever since the news of Linley's battle with Olivier had spread to the Yulan Empire, Delia had schemed nonstop, finally managing to convince the Emperor of the Yulan Empire to send a special envoy to the O'Brien Empire.

Before heading out, they had notified the O'Brien Empire, which had naturally agreed.

"Channe City..." Delia murmured.

That place which occupied her dreams had a person whom she longed for.

The river waters continued to rush forward rapidly. On the front deck, the Worldbear and the Wildthunder Stormhawk stood alongside Delia as the massive ship continued to sail forward at high speed.

Soon, the ship disappeared off into the horizon as it made its way through the Channe River.

The news that a special envoy from the Yulan Empire was coming quickly spread across the imperial capital, and the imperial clan as well as the nobles quickly learned of this as well. But as far as the imperial capital was concerned, they only cared about two things right now.

They only cared about two major duels.

The first duel was the duel which had just happened between the Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier, and the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson. The second one was the duel which would occur three months from now between the Dragonblood Warrior, Linley, and the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson.

Would Linley learn from the mistakes of his predecessor, Olivier? Or would he come to the same disastrous end?

Nobody knew.

But in the hearts of the citizens of the Empire, most believed that the strongest Saint, Haydson, would gain victory yet again.

Boulder Street. Count Wharton's estate.

"In the next three months, nobody is permitted to disturb Lord Linley unless there is something critical!" This declaration came forth from the manor ever since that stormy night.

The atmosphere in the estate was extremely tense.

In the rear training courtyard, Wharton trained for a short while. Then, not in the mood for more training, he placed the warblade 'Slaughterer' to one side, then sat down unhappily.

"That Haydson really goes too far." Wharton cursed. As soon as he thought about Linley, he began to worry. "Haydson, if you are so tough, why don't you wait ten years and let my big brother reach the Saint-level in his human form before dueling with my big brother! What's the point of dueling now?"

"Fuck his grandmother. He doesn't just go too far. He's absolutely vile!"

Gates walked over, saying angrily, "There are plenty of Saints in the Empire, and the War God's College has many experts as well. Why doesn't Haydson go challenge them? Instead, he challenges his Lordship. His Lordship is only twenty seven years old. That Haydson is several centuries old."

"No point in cursing him."

Barker walked over, resting his massive long-handled greataxe against the artificial hill. "His Lordship has already agreed to duel with Haydson. Right now, our only option is to hope that his Lordship will win."

"His Lordship definitely will win."

Gates clenched his fist and pumped it in the air several times as he said angrily, "I refuse to believe that Haydson's internal organs are as defensively powerful as his external defense. What's more, that weird thing which his Lordship developed a while ago seems to be really mysterious as well. It definitely must be extraordinary."

Gates and the others didn't really understand how powerful the Pulseguard Defense was.

Linley was within his private courtyard. Right now, he was seated in the meditative stance beneath a tree, constantly training in accordance with the 'Secret Dragonblood Manual'. Right now, Linley already was at a very high level of understanding. All he needed was battle-qi.

Whenever Linley had any free time, he would train in battle-qi, trying to absorb as much of the energy from the Dragonblood in his veins as possible, ideally until reaching the Saint-level. However, training battle-qi actually didn't require too much focus. As long as one trained in accordance with the set methods, that would be enough. Thus, right now, Linley was pondering other questions in his mind.

"Last time, when I encountered the War God's first disciple, Fain, and when I encountered the War God, I found that they were both capable of soul-based attacks. Olivier also mastered such a form of attack. Most likely, there are many people who have mastered this type of technique. Should I also try to develop this sort of soul-based attack? Even if I don't, I should at least learn how to defend against it, right?"

While cultivating his battle-qi, Linley continued to wrestle with this question in his mind.

What were the principles underlying soul-based attacks?

And how would one guard against it?

While Linley was thinking and training, Haeru lay resting against the ground, while Bebe was curled up comfortably on Haeru's back, his eyes half-closed.

"Bebe, do you think Master will be able to beat that Haydson in their duel?" Haeru said in a low voice.

"Naturally." Bebe opened his eyes and said with complete confidence.

But then, Bebe said in a low voice, "But of course, that Haydson seems to be really powerful as well. But no matter what, if the Boss ends up at the point of death in his duel against Haydson, I, Bebe, will immediately charge forward to assist. Hrmph. Two nights ago, everyone just watched as Olivier was beaten half to death. He still hasn't woken up yet. I can't let the Boss succumb to such a state."

"Isn't that a breach of rules?" Haeru said questioningly.

When two people dueled, regardless of victory or defeat, others were not to interfere.

“Screw the damn rules. The earth is big and the heavens are bigger, but nothing is bigger than the Boss. How can the rules compare in importance to my Boss’s life?” Bebe said arrogantly. “What’s more, so what if I, Bebe, interfere? My Boss is a magus, ya know! When a magus duels against a warrior, they usually bring their magical beasts. If I interfere, that isn’t a violation of the rules.” As he spoke, Bebe felt as though his argument had a lot of merit, and he laughed delightedly.

The gates to the imperial capital were open. The path from the imperial palace to the east gate of the city were all lined with guards from the imperial army, who had been divided up into two neat lines on each side of the street.

The knights of the imperial palace formed into lined regiments, following behind the Emperor’s carriage, with a large number of nobles following behind them.

The Saint-level experts of the War God’s College, Kenyon and Lanke, had both arrived as well.

This was because they knew that the delegation from the Yulan Empire included a Saint-level Grand Magus. If their side had no Saints present, then their side would seem weaker.

“Why aren’t they here yet?” Emperor Johann said unhappily to a nearby palace attendant.

“Your Imperial Majesty, the ship of the Yulan Empire’s special envoy is about to reach the river’s harbor. Most likely, they’ll be here soon.” The palace attendant said respectfully.

Emperor Johann nodded.

Without question, the two most powerful nations in the Yulan continent were the Yulan Empire and the O’Brien Empire. Emperor Johann very much wished that his own O’Brien Empire could be superior to and suppress the Yulan Empire.

But alas, the Yulan Empire had its own strong points.

The Yulan Empire had been in existence for over ten thousand years now, and was an ancient nation. What’s more, the Yulan Empire had become one of the greatest sources for magi in the world. If the O’Brien Empire had the most Saint-level warriors, then the Yulan Empire could be said to have just as many Saint-level Grand Magi.

After all, Saint-level Grand Magi were far more threatening than Saint-level warriors. For example, that wind-style Saint-level Grand Magus, Longhaus. Not even

Haydson would dare say that he was totally confident of defeating him. After all, so long as Longhaus was given a bit of time to prepare, his Dimensional Edge spell could chop Haydson into two halves.

“They are here!”

The many spectators of the O’Brien Empire saw the enormous ship sail over. When they saw that adorable big bear on the deck, as well as that large hawk, many people felt astonished.

“A Worldbear? And a Wildthunder Stormhawk?”

Kenyon and Lanke exchanged glances. They couldn’t help but feel astonished. Even if they joined forces, they weren’t certain that they would be able to defeat a Saint-level Worldbear.

Delia was dressed in a beautiful long robe and standing next to the wind-style Saint-level Grand Magus, Longhaus. They disembarked together, and behind them came the two magical beasts, the warriors on the ship, and the magical beasts of the warriors.

“Clang!”

The knights of the Empire formed into two ranks, while at the same time raising their pikes high into the air. These knights were specially selected from the finest knights of the imperial palace. All of them were of the seventh rank, and their leader was a warrior of the eighth rank.

“Teacher, the warriors of the O’Brien Empire really are more powerful than those of our Yulan Empire. They even have a totally different aura. Our imperial capital is a bit too dissolute.” Delia chatted quietly with her teacher as though no one else was present.

Longhaus nodded slightly as well.

The imperial capital of the Yulan Empire was an extremely ancient city, and the ancient clans of the capital only thought of enjoying life. To the contrary, the O’Brien Empire was a nation of warriors, and all of them strove to outdo each other. No wonder it was hailed as the most militarily powerful nation.

Emperor Johann, Lanke, Kenyon, and the palace attendants went to welcome them.

“Delia Leon, right? Haha...” Emperor Johann laughed loudly.

Delia very courteously curtsied. "Special Envoy Delia of the Yulan Empire pays her respects to the mighty ruler of the O'Brien Empire, Emperor Johann. I bring with me the sincerest greetings and well-wishes of the Emperor of the Yulan Empire."

"Emperor Johann, this is my teacher, Saint-level Grand Magus Longhaus." Delia smiled as she made the introductions.

Emperor Johann looked at Master Longhaus. "Very happy to meet you, Master Longhaus."

"I am very honored to meet you as well, Emperor Johann." Longhaus said with a smile.

Delia couldn't help but glance around at her surroundings. A hint of disappointment appeared in her eyes. She didn't see the person she was looking for. But at the same time, she said to Emperor Johann, "Emperor Johann, these two should be two powerful Saint-level experts, correct? Can you introduce them to me?"

Before Delia had arrived, she had already acquired quite a bit of information, and she already knew quite a bit about Kenyon and Lanke.

Special Envoy Delia of the Yulan Empire, the wind-style Grand Magus Longhaus, and the others had now formally entered the imperial capital of Channe, where a grand welcoming ceremony awaited them.

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Delia chatted and jested with Emperor Johann, and their conversation was full of humor and amusement. Emperor Johann's loud, clear laughter rang out nonstop.

Emperor Johann, Delia, Master Longhaus, Kenyon, Lanke and the others walked in front, with the palace servants and palace maids as well as many powerful knights taking up the rear.

The many other nobles followed behind the knights at a distance.

"What a beautiful woman." A group of young nobles of the imperial capital were clustered together. All of these young nobles had an extremely high rank in the Empire. Some were princes, while others were main branch descendants of major clans. They had never lacked for anything, and they often formed little cliques. Nobody in the imperial capital dared to offend them.

The words that had just been spoken came from the son of Prince Julin, Marquis Jeff [Ji'fo].

"I think her name is Delia." Another noble youngster next to him spoke. This young noble was named Scott, and he was the Eighth Prince of the Empire. "She's so beautiful and has such grace. There are very few like her, even here in the imperial capital."

Marquis Jeff, Prince Scott, and the others all stared from afar while rating her.

Indeed, Delia was an extremely alluring and charismatic figure.

Her every movement contained the grace and poise of an ancient clan, and as a magus of the seventh rank, her movements were filled with grace. What's more, Delia was beautiful to begin with, and her dazzling, soft golden hair shone like the sun.

Scott sighed emotionally, "Delia is a member of the Leon clan, and was previously a student at the Ernst Institute. Nowadays, she is the disciple of a wind-style Grand Magus Saint, Longhaus. In the Yulan Empire's imperial capital, she can be considered one of the most influential nobles. No doubt there are countless young nobles pursuing her."

Marquis Jeff's eyes were shining as he stared at Delia. "If I were to successfully woo her, I would be willing to never touch another woman again."

"Cousin Jeff, you are that determined?" Scott laughed as he glanced at Jeff.

"Of course!" Marquis Jeff said with conviction.

Emperor Johann was an extremely biased person. His one and only younger brother was Prince Julin, and Emperor Johann was extremely solicitous of him, to the point of even allowing Prince Julin to take over and rule the Southeast Administrative Province, one of the seven large Administrative Province's.

As the saying goes, love me, love my dog. Naturally, Marquis Jeff was doted upon by Emperor Johann as well. In the imperial capital, his status was extremely high, and this group of young nobles accepted him as their leader.

"Since you've made up your mind, cousin, then I can't let myself fall behind you." Scott laughed confidently. "Cousin Jeff, let's see which of us two bros will be able to successfully woo Ms. Delia."

"Fine." Jeff nodded. With an evil laugh, he said, "If we're successful, it can be said that we'll have really gained a huge amount of face on behalf of all the men of the O'Brien Empire. After all, those young nobles of the Yulan Empire hadn't been able to successfully woo Delia."

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"I imagine that Ms. Delia must be tired after her long journey, along with Master Longhaus. How about this. Let Us order some people to arrange places for Ms. Delia and Master Longhaus to rest. Later at night, after you've rested, you can attend the dinner banquet which We have arranged. What do you say?" Emperor Johann came to a halt once they reached Boulder Street and said.

The residences of Boulder Street had all been constructed by the imperial clan.

When the imperial clan bequeathed estates to nobles or received guests, it was usually all done within the confines of Boulder Street. The estates here couldn't be bought with mere money.

"Then we shall do as you suggest, your Imperial Majesty." Delia said with a smile.

At this moment, Scott and Marquis Jeff quickly walked forward. They, too, knew that Emperor Johann was about to separate from Ms. Delia. They had to seize the opportunity.

Given their status, those guards naturally wouldn't stop them.

"Ms. Delia and Master Longhaus, I imagine you two aren't too familiar with our imperial capital. We shall arrange a guide to accompany you." Emperor Johann said with a laugh.

"Thank you, your Imperial Majesty." Delia said with appreciation.

"Imperial father." "Your Imperial Majesty." At this point, Scott and Marquis Jeff's eyes lit up, and they called out without any hesitation.

Emperor Johann glanced backwards and saw that it was his son as well as his nephew.

"Scott, Jeff, what is it?" Emperor Johann was in a fine mood today.

Marquis Jeff said respectfully, "Your Imperial Majesty, you plan to arrange a guide? Scott and I are as familiar with the imperial capital as our own homes. I think that

the two of us can be the guides. We would definitely make Ms. Delia very happy with our services.”

Emperor Johann glanced at Jeff and Scott upon hearing these words. How could he not guess what these two really intended?

However, Emperor Johann also thought that Delia was a fine woman. If his nephew or his son were able to successfully woo this woman, that would be a good thing as well.

“Let Us ask Ms. Delia first.” Emperor Johann turned to look at Delia. “Ms. Delia, what do you think?”

Delia glanced at Scott and Marquis Jeff. Immediately, both of them stood slightly straighter, putting on gentlemanly appearances. A hint of laughter appeared in Delia’s eyes.

“Thank you. I’ll trouble you two to assist me then.” Delia curtsied slightly.

“No trouble, no trouble at all.” Scott and Marquis Jeff hurriedly said.

A hint of a smile could be seen on the lips of Master Longhaus, who was by Delia’s side. As his disciple, how could he not understand Delia? When they were in the imperial capital of the Yulan Empire, countless young men had pursued Delia. Given Delia’s skill, she had easily beaten them at their own game and played them like a fiddle.

“Milady Special Envoy, this will be the place where you will live while you are here in the imperial capital.” A palace attendant pointed towards an estate in front of them.

The nearby Marquis Jeff immediately said, “Ms. Delia, the Boulder Street is an extremely famous street within the O’Brien Empire. On this street, there are even several Saints who live here. For example, our Empire’s Prodigy Sword Saint, Olivier, and his younger brother. They both live on Boulder Street. The genius Master Linley and his younger brother both live on Boulder Street as well.”

While they passed between the estates, Marquis Jeff continuously introduced them to her.

“Right. These two geniuses would be considered the most outstanding individuals anywhere in the Yulan continent.” Scott didn’t want to fall behind either.

Delia, hearing their words, couldn't help but allow a complicated look appear in her eyes. But naturally, she quickly returned to her normal, friendly smile.

"That isn't necessarily the case." A deep, rumbling sound could be heard from the nearby bear.

Scott and Jeff looked at the big bear and immediately squeezed out a smile. When they were in the welcoming party, they had overheard that this big bear was a Saint-level Worldbear. Saint-level magical beasts could freely change their size. A Worldbear was usually well over ten meters high in their normal form.

He could easily crush them to death with a single paw.

"Delia's older brother is very formidable as well. He is only twenty seven years old, but has become a magus of the eighth rank. What's more, he has become the personal disciple of the High Priest." The big bear looked at Delia. "Delia, am I right?"

Delia smiled slightly and nodded.

Becoming a twenty seven year old magus of the eighth rank was definitely an extremely terrifying accomplishment. At this speed, it would be quite possible for him to become an Arch Magus of the ninth rank before the age of forty.

It must be understood that someone who could reach the ninth rank before the age of forty was, without question, a definite world-shaking genius.

"Dixie is indeed the most talented magus I have ever seen." Master Longhaus laughed as well. As they spoke, they entered the main hall of their estate.

"Magus talent?"

Lifting his head proudly, Scott said, "Master Longhaus, on the topic of talent as a magus, I understand that our Empire's Master Linley, also twenty seven years old, is already an Arch Magus of the ninth rank. What's more, he is a peak-stage Saint-level warrior."

"A twenty seven year old Arch Magus of the ninth rank? Impossible!!!" Master Longhaus couldn't believe it at all. "In the entire history of the Yulan continent, there has never been anyone who could reach the ninth rank before the age of thirty."

"Scott, is this true?" Marquis Jeff asked questioningly.

Scott said with absolute certainty, "It is true. My Imperial father personally told me this. When Master Linley dueled with Olivier, everyone learned how powerful he was as a warrior, but they didn't pay attention to his abilities with magic. He is indeed already an Arch Magus of the ninth rank."

Hearing Scott's words, although on an emotional level Longhaus still couldn't believe it, his intellect told him that this was probably true.

"Master Linley. An Arch Magus of the ninth rank." Delia wasn't too surprised.

In Delia's heart, Linley was a person filled with secrets and miracles. A sixteen year old grandmaster sculptor, and supposedly the number two genius magus in all of history. But now, he had become the number one genius magus in all of history. Why would that be 'impossible'?

"You can keep chatting. Delia, I'm going to go take a rest. If you need to talk to me, just notify Parry." Longhaus instructed.

"Yes, Teacher." Delia said humbly. Next to her, Scott and Jeff bowed as well.

"Gentlemen, I'm tired as well. I'll retire to my room and rest. Excuse me." Delia rose as well.

Scott and Jeff knew that they couldn't push her, and they immediately nodded. Delia left, with that Wildthunder Stormhawk by her side.

Ever since Master Longhaus had tamed the Worldbear, the Wildthunder Stormhawk's primary responsibility became guarding Delia. From this, one could tell how much Master Longhaus cared about her.

"He's also living on Boulder Street. Maybe he's very close to me."

Delia stood in front of her window quietly.

That night at Wushan township, when she had bid Linley farewell, then left the Holy Union and returned to her own ancestral nation, she had been preparing to return to the Holy Union after the Yulan Festival. But then, she had heard of the Apocalypse Day which had occurred.

The entire Kingdom of Fenlai had been reduced to rubble and become the playground for magical beasts.

And according to the news available to her clan, a few days before the Apocalypse Day, in the estate of the magus genius, Linley, a demon appeared, attempting to

murder the king of the Kingdom of Fenlai. Most likely, Linley himself had already died.

This news had caused Delia to suffer a major illness.

It had taken a full year before she had fully recovered.

In years after this, she had no news of Linley at all, and she had even made up her mind to abandon love and instead focus on carrying out the affairs of her clan and train in magic. But she didn't expect...that a while ago, news came to the Yulan Empire of Linley and Olivier's duel.

This news caused Delia's deadened heart to immediately grow excited. She felt as though she were full of energy and full of hope.

After a few machinations, she arranged for today's visit.

Delia had planned to wait until the next day before visiting Linley, but after spending merely half an hour in her room, she felt as though she had waited for half a year.

Especially after learning that Linley also lived on Boulder Street...she could no longer resist.

"Little Wind, tell Teacher that I plan to pay Linley a visit." Delia said to the Wildthunder Stormhawk. A while later, Master Longhaus appeared outside her door.

An indulgent smile was on Master Longhaus' face. "Delia, I knew that you wouldn't be able to sit still for long before deciding to go see him." Longhaus knew everything there was to know about his student Delia's affairs.

A bashful red flush crept onto Delia's face.

"Teacher!" Delia wrinkled her nose. "Stop making fun of me. Let's go."

"Fine, fine." Longhaus laughed.

Delia and Master Longhaus, followed by the Worldbear and the Wildthunder Stormhawk, left the estate. When they did, they saw Jeff and Scott waiting outside, seated.

"Ms. Delia?" Jeff and Scott's eyes lit up, and they immediately rose to their feet. "Where are you headed?"

Delia's forehead creased, but she still managed to say with a smile, "I was planning to go pay a visit to your so-called genius, Master Linley."

"Oh, so you are going to visit Master Linley?" Marquis Jeff hurriedly said. "That's a good idea. But I'm afraid that it will be difficult for you to see him. This is because over two months from now, Master Linley will be engaging in a duel with Lord Haydson at Mt. Tujiao."

"What?" Delia was stunned, and for once, lost her cool.

"Oh, you just arrived, so you didn't know. Two days ago, Olivier and Lord Haydson dueled, with the result being that Lord Olivier was badly injured to the point of death. Lord Haydson then immediately invited Master Linley to a duel as well, and Master Linley has already accepted." The nearby Scott explained.

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"Linley and Haydson?" Master Longhaus said in surprise as well.

Marquis Jeff nodded repeatedly. "Right. Two nights ago, Lord Olivier was injured by Lord Haydson so badly that he is still in a coma. Immediately afterwards, Lord Haydson challenged Master Linley."

Marquis Jeff and Scott's words both contained some resentment, suggesting that Haydson was going too far.

"This Haydson is reputed to be the most powerful Saint. For him to be able to injure Olivier so badly that he entered a coma means that Haydson's reputation is definitely deserved. No matter how much of a genius Linley is, he is only twenty seven..." Master Longhaus was somewhat dissatisfied as well.

He knew that his disciple, Delia, liked Linley. Naturally, he himself looked favorably on Linley as well.

"Olivier was injured to the point of entering a coma?" Delia's eyes were blazing. "How could he be in a coma after receiving treatment from light-style magic?"

No matter how serious the injury, light-style magic could easily and totally repair it. And what's more, there was another type of magic which was even more effective than light-style magic for healing; Life Magic!

The three types of High Magic; Necromantic Magic, Oracular Magic, and Life Magic.

As long as one didn't die, even if one's soul was heavily damaged, Life Magic could heal it.

"It seems it has something to do with his soul." As a prince, Scott knew quite a bit.

"His soul?" Master Longhaus frowned. "Can it be that Haydson possesses a soul-based attack?" Actually, Grand Magus Saints were generally proficient in soul-based attacks.

Generally speaking, after beginning to gain insight into the Laws, it wasn't hard for them to use soul-based attacks, given their powerful spiritual energy.

"In your opinion, does Linley have any chance of defeating Haydson?" Delia suddenly asked.

"Of course not." Scott said bluntly. "Lord Haydson has been famous for centuries, and nobody has ever been able to defeat him! Master Linley competed a while ago against Lord Olivier, and the two were roughly on par. Since Lord Haydson was able to beat Olivier into such a terrible condition, it is very possible that he might badly injure Linley or even kill him."

No matter how calm and collected Delia was, she was beginning to worry for Linley.

What if Linley was killed?

Delia didn't even dare to imagine such a thing.

"Would Haydson truly be so merciless as to go full force?" Delia's face still maintained its calm.

"Ms. Delia, two days ago, when Lord Haydson dueled Lord Olivier, he went full force on Lord Olivier. How could he be merciful with Master Linley?" Marquis Jeff said.

Master Longhaus shook his head. "When Saints do battle, unless there is a huge gap in power, we do not dare to hold back. If you hold back but your opponent goes full force, you might die."

Delia was silent for a moment.

"Ms. Delia?" Scott and Marquis Jeff called to her softly.

"Nothing. Let's go." Delia's face returned to her normal, professional smile, but her smile was somewhat forced.

Marquis Jeff and Scott both nodded.

At Count Wharton's estate.

"Ms. Delia, as I said earlier, you won't necessarily be able to see Master Linley." Marquis Jeff laughed, then casually spoke to the gate guard, "Go report that the Eighth Imperial Prince, Marquis Jeff, and the Special Envoy from the Yulan Empire have come here to meet with Count Wharton."

"Yes. Please wait here a moment."

One of the guards outside the estate ran inside to make his report.

Delia and the others knew that given Linley's current status, meeting him would be very difficult. Right now, their only option was to first see Wharton, and then ask to meet with Linley.

"Everyone, please come in."

Delia, Master Longhaus, Marquis Jeff, and Scott all entered the Count's residence.

Within the main hall.

"Wharton." Scott walked into the main hall, laughing in a very familiar manner. "Let me make some introductions. This beautiful young lady is the Special Envoy from the Yulan Empire, Ms. Delia."

Scott was the Imperial Eighth Prince, while Nina was the Imperial Seventh Princess. Wharton naturally was extremely familiar with Scott.

"The Special Envoy from the Yulan Empire? Why has she come to meet me?" Although Wharton was very surprised, he still smiled politely. "Ms. Delia, an honor to meet you."

"Count Wharton." Delia smiled as she spoke. "This is my teacher, the wind-style Grand Magus Saint, Master Longhaus."

Wharton was startled. Housekeeper Hiri, standing behind him, was startled as well.

In the O'Brien Empire, Saint-level warriors would be seen from time to time, but they had never seen a Saint-level Grand Magus. After all, there were extremely few Grand Magi in the O'Brien Empire.

"Wharton, the Special Imperial Envoy has arrived?" A loud, brash voice rang out. It was the fifth of the Barker brothers, Gates.

Wharton had been in the middle of his training with Barker and his brothers. Hearing the report from his subordinates, he had stopped training and come out to welcome the guests. Out of curiosity, Gates had come over as well.

"Whoah. What a pretty girl." Gates' eyes shone.

"Gates, this is the Special Imperial Envoy, Ms. Delia. This is the wind-style Grand Magus Saint, Master Longhaus." Wharton made the introductions, afraid that Gates would cause a diplomatic disaster.

Gates' attention immediately turned to Master Longhaus.

"Whoah! A Grand Magus Saint!" Gates' eyes were as wide as an ox's.

Master Longhaus secretly sighed to himself. Good grief. Where did these people come from? Wharton's massive physique had already shocked Longhaus, but Wharton was at least relatively handsome. Gates was totally different. His waist was astonishingly thick, and the man himself looked like a giant bear.

"Step away from my Master." A deep voice rang out.

The big bear behind Master Longhaus suddenly began to grow in size. Originally, he was only two meters tall, but suddenly he increased to three meters in height. The Worldbear lowered his head to stare at Gates, a hint of delight in his eyes.

"A Saint-level magical beast?" Gates raised his head to stare at the Worldbear.

Delia immediately went straight to the point. "Count Wharton, my teacher and I have come for the purpose of meeting with Master Linley."

"To see my big bro..." Wharton frowned.

These people didn't have a low status, and they even had a Grand Magus Saint with them. However, to Wharton, his big brother's training was more important. After all, in more than two months time, he would be in a major duel.

"Very sorry, but my big brother is focusing on his upcoming duel with Haydson, and he can't be disturbed." Wharton said. When he mentioned Haydson's name, he didn't have the slightest bit of respect to his voice.

Hearing these words, Delia, as well, felt that Linley's preparation for his duel was more important. After being silent for a moment, she said, "Then...I won't disturb him."

Longhaus, by her side, sighed secretly, then said in a loud voice, "Count Wharton, my student, Delia, was previously also a student at the Ernst Institute, and she was a very good friend and classmate of your big brother's. They haven't met for ten years."

"A student of the Ernst Institute?" Wharton's heart was swayed.

Actually, every day, Linley would still eat and rest like normal. After all, he didn't train nonstop like when he was developing his Pulseguard Defense. It wasn't a big deal if he paused for a bit to welcome some guests.

If they were people that Linley didn't know, Wharton would refuse them.

But this was his big brother's old schoolmate.

"Then...come with me." Wharton nodded.

Delia's fists clenched nervously. She took a deep breath to calm herself down. By her side, Master Longhaus laughed as he patted Delia on the shoulders. "Relax."

"An old classmate?" Scott and Marquis Jeff were both surprised.

But Delia walked in front of them, not paying attention to them in the slightest. Scott and Jeff therefore quite conscientiously maintained their silence.

After walking for a while...

"Ms. Delia, my big bro is training in the courtyard in front of us." Wharton laughed, while Gates hurriedly said, "I'll go inform his Lordship."

Delia could feel her breathing grow more rapid.

Ten years!

That year Linley's father had died, Delia had parted ways with Linley. In the blink of an eye...it had been ten full years. Delia's eyes closed for a moment. Once her eyes opened again, she had returned to her normal calm.

"Bebe, out of the way. I have something important to report." Gates' loud voice rang out from the courtyard.

"Your Lordship, there's someone named Delia outside. She says she's your old classmate and wants to see you?"

"Delia?" A calm voice that carried a hint of surprise rang out from within the courtyard. The voice wasn't very loud, but to Delia, the words seemed to ring in the skies with the power of a thunderbolt.

No matter how calm or tranquil one normally was, when one met with someone one had been thinking about for ten years...she couldn't prevent her heart from shaking.

"Whoosh!" A gentle gust of wind blew past the surrounding trees, gently lifting up Delia's long golden hair, causing it to sway with the wind.

Delia couldn't help but narrow her eyes due to the wind.

Just at this moment, the figure she had dreamed about over a million times appeared in front of the courtyard's gate. The man wore a light blue robe, and his formerly short hair had grown long.

Delia carefully looked at him.

"He's a bit taller than he was, and much more mature." Seeing the man of her dreams, for a moment, Delia couldn't speak.

"Delia. It really is you." Linley suddenly spoke out in a startled, joyful tone.

"It is me." Delia finally was able to speak.

Linley's eyes were as dark and profound as the sea. Quickly, he noticed Master Longhaus by Delia's side, as well as his Worldbear. "A Saint-level magical beast. Worldbear?"

"Linley, this is my teacher, the wind-style Grand Magus Saint, Master Longhaus. The Worldbear is his magical beast companion." Delia finally recovered from her earlier stupor.

"Come in." Linley smiled.

Seeing Linley's smile, for some reason she herself didn't understand, Delia felt a hot gush of warmth in her heart. "Is this feeling...happiness?" Delia's eyes were turning red.

"Wharton, you can help welcome these two." Linley glanced at Marquis Jeff and Scott, then didn't say anything else.

Scott and Marquis Jeff weren't angry at all. They immediately left respectfully. After all, the man was a Saint. Even his Imperial Majesty would be respectful to him. How could he possibly waste time on nobles like them?

Around a stone table in the courtyard.

Linley, Delia, and Longhaus were all seated around the table.

"What are you looking at?" The Worldbear glanced at the Blackcloud Panther, Haeru. As a Saint-level magical beast, the Worldbear was an extremely proud creature.

"You, you stupid bear." Haeru sneered aloud.

"Saint-level magical beast?" Longhaus and Delia, hearing Haeru speak, both turned to look at Linley in astonishment.

"Don't squabble, Haeru." Linley glanced at Haeru, and Haeru immediately crouched down, no longer paying any attention to the Worldbear. Actually, Haeru himself knew that he wasn't a match for the Worldbear. But at the same time, Haeru wasn't afraid either...because the Worldbear's speed was inferior to his own.

But Bebe actually waved his claws in a threatening manner towards the Worldbear.

"Bebe." Delia was extremely delighted. "Come here."

Very obediently, Bebe made a single hop and landed directly into Delia's arms.

"Bebe, long time no see." Delia devotedly petted Bebe on his glossy fur, and Bebe closed his eyes contentedly.

Although she was petting Bebe, Delia was still looking at Linley.

In the past, Linley had been very hard and callous. But now, he seemed more gentle and much more natural and at ease.

"Master Linley, I hear you are going to duel with Haydson?" Longhaus started off the conversation.

"Right."

Linley smiled and nodded.

Delia turned her head to stare at Linley and said, "Linley, can it be that you are confident that you can defeat Haydson?"

"No." Linley said honestly. Delia was one of his extremely few close friends at the Ernst Institute. Aside from Yale, Reynolds, and George, Delia was probably his closest friend.

Seeing Delia, Linley couldn't help but think back to their final meeting from ten years ago.

That night...

Delia had come late at night to see Linley and tell him that she was leaving the Holy Union. She said that before leaving, she wanted a hug. But who would've expected that their goodbye hug would have turned into a goodbye kiss?

Linley truly had been stunned by that kiss.

Even today, upon seeing Delia, Linley couldn't help but think back to that night.

"You aren't confident?" Delia chewed her lips, then asked, "Then, Linley...can you cancel the duel and not compete against him?"

Master Longhaus shook his head. "Delia, how can you say something so foolish? After two Saints have already agreed to a duel, how can one back out?"

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Master Longhaus could clearly tell that his disciple cared about Linley so much that she had lost her wits.

"Delia, it is fine. Don't worry!" Linley laughed. Linley felt very moved at Delia's obvious concern.

"Okay." Delia nodded.

However, Delia was still worried. After all, the person dueling with Linley was reputedly the most powerful Saint alive; the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson.

Longhaus looked at Linley, then at Delia. Laughing, he said, "It's been quite a while since you two classmates have met with each other. I won't disturb you. Let me go for a walk. The two of you can have a nice chat. I imagine, after ten years, you have many things to say to each other."

Delia cast a grateful glance at her teacher.

Clearly, Master Longhaus was giving her a chance to have some alone time with Linley.

As he spoke, Master Longhaus led his Worldbear away from that courtyard, leaving behind only Linley, Delia, Bebe, and Haeru.

Delia lowered her head, continuing to stroke Bebe's fur. She was waiting for Linley to speak.

A beautiful woman, petting an adorable pet. This was a soul-stirring image...but Linley only felt awkward. If he was facing a Saint, Linley wouldn't feel any fear at all, but facing Delia, Linley felt very complicated.

The female of his age group whom he was most familiar with was definitely Delia.

After all, they grew up together.

Linley wasn't a dummy. He knew how Delia felt...and this was why Linley felt so awkward. Especially now that he was alone with her.

"These past few years, have you been well?" After a long silence, Linley finally managed to force out this rather blunt and graceless phrase.

Delia raised her head, glancing at Linley. She actually let out a chuckle. "Linley, you are already a Saint-level expert. Since when have you become so shy? I've been fairly well these years. With my clan and my teacher backing me up, who would dare to mistreat me?"

After hearing Delia's words, Linley felt slightly more relaxed.

"What have you been up to these years?" Delia said softly.

"Not too much." Linley seemed to once again think back to what had happened ten years ago. Ten years ago, after learning of his father's death, he had given up everything and set his mind upon avenging his father.

He had walked farther and farther along the road to revenge, and in the end he had indeed killed Clayde. But due to the encirclement and battle with those six Special Executors of the Radiant Church, in the end, his most dearly beloved Grandpa Doehring had sacrificed his soul for him...

Three years of painstaking training in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, six years of quiet meditation in the O'Brien Empire.

That battle with Stehle, that battle with those six Angels, that sparring match with McKenzie...one scene after another appeared in his mind. As they did, without holding anything back, Linley began to tell Delia what had happened.

Delia stopped petting Bebe, intently listening to every single word Linley said.

Right now, Linley spoke in a very calm, simple manner, as though he were very relaxed. But Delia could totally imagine what Linley's past ten years of life had been like. After finishing speaking, Linley couldn't help but sigh repeatedly.

"Linley." Delia suddenly reached out to take Linley by the hand, gripping it tightly!

Linley raised his head to stare at Delia in surprise. Delia was staring at him. "Linley, don't let your life be so exhausting. You've done very well already."

Delia's hands were rather cold.

But Linley could feel the beat of Delia's heart through her tight grip. It was beating very quietly. Linley felt a surge of warmth in his own heart, slowly thawing a small part of his frozen heart.

"Thank you." Linley said softly.

"Don't say thank you to me." Delia shook her head, her scorching gaze on Linley's face.

The air between the two of them grew warm. For some reason, Linley felt himself grow a bit muddle-headed. Scenes of himself and Alice would drift to his mind, but then they would be replaced by that kiss he had shared that night with Delia. His heartbeat sped up as well. Linley actually was growing a bit frantic.

"Bebe." Linley looked at Bebe, then looked at Delia. "Delia, do you know how powerful Bebe has gotten?" Under that sort of atmosphere, the only thing the panicking Linley could do was immediately change the topic.

Linley didn't know what he might end up doing if that atmosphere continued.

Thus, Linley decided to simply change the topic.

Delia secretly sighed to herself. She was skilled in negotiations, and thus she naturally was a student of psychology as well. When she had been at the Ernst Institute, she had already begun studying psychology. In fact, the reason she started psychology was to better understand Linley.

Delia understood Linley very well.

Delia knew that, after having experienced what he had with Alice, although Linley had seemingly already forgotten about her, in truth...the after-effects of that

relationship were not something which Linley could simply forget about as easily as that.

First love was actually very fragile.

Especially for a stubborn person such as Linley. Once he truly loved someone, then he would place an even higher value on that first love than normal people. The failure of that first love would unconsciously cause Linley to have somewhat of a phobia towards love.

Even if other females tried to approach him, Linley would naturally recoil.

Delia understood that a layer of ice had already covered Linley's heart. If one wished to melt that layer of ice, one couldn't be too hasty. It would have to be melted one step at a time.

Delia deeply loved Linley, and in her heart, she felt pain on Linley's behalf.

Linley had suffered so much. One loved one after another had left him. True, he was extremely accomplished, having become a peak-stage Saint at the age of twenty seven. But how much bitterness and suffering had occurred on the path he had taken?

Delia truly didn't wish for Linley to continue exhausting himself. For Linley's sake, Delia had already made up her mind to spend as much time as would be needed. As long as she could help Linley be a bit more relaxed and a bit happier, she would be very satisfied.

"Delia, what are you thinking about?" Linley saw that Delia seemed to have gone daydreaming.

Delia immediately snapped out of it and laughed, "What am I thinking about? I'm thinking about you." Linley couldn't help but be stunned. Seeing the look on Linley's face, Delia laughed. "I'm joking."

Linley laughed as well.

"What did you want to say about Bebe just now?" Delia laughed.

"Bebe, want to say a few things to Delia?" Linley laughed as he looked at Bebe.

"Say a few things?" Delia looked at Bebe in surprise. That ordinary little Shadowmouse she had seen at the Ernst Institute could speak? All magical beasts capable of speech were at the Saint-level.

Bebe jumped to his feet, clambering onto the stone table. Standing tall, Bebe raised his little head proudly and said in a loud voice, "Ms. Delia, let me tell you a secret. When the Boss and I were in the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts, the Boss would often talk to me about you. He even said that you had forcibly kissed him once!"

"Whap!" Linley immediately slapped towards Bebe, but Linley's palm passed straight through 'Bebe'. It was nothing more than Bebe's after-image!

Bebe was standing in mid-air, laughing at Linley delighted.

"Bebe, you little rascal." Linley didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

He had never said such a thing before. Bebe actually made that all up.

"Bebe, be good, come over to me." Delia stretched her hand out, and Bebe immediately hopped into Delia's bosom again. In Delia's warm embrace, he seemed to feel very comfortable, and even winked a few times at Linley.

Thanks to Bebe's intentional 'teasing', Linley and Delia were both laughing constantly. Time flew by very quickly, and soon, the sky gradually began to darken.

Seeing how the sky was darkening, Delia suddenly remembered that tonight, Emperor Johann had arranged a major welcome banquet for her.

"Linley, it's getting late. I need to leave for now. Tonight, Emperor Johann has arranged a dinner banquet for me. I have to attend." Delia said apologetically.

Linley nodded slightly. "Then I won't keep you any longer."

"Will you go tonight?" Delia suddenly asked.

"Me?" Linley laughed. "Emperor Johann didn't invite me, and I don't like dinner banquets. Forget it."

Delia nodded slightly.

Actually, how could Emperor Johann not have invited Linley? Only, Wharton had already refused on his older brother's behalf. He knew that Linley didn't like banquets, and also didn't like dealing with those nobles.

"Farewell." Delia said softly.

"Farewell." Linley looked at Delia.

Delia stood there for a moment before slowly leaving the courtyard. After she walked outside, she turned to look back at Linley. It was already growing dark, and there wasn't much light. As Delia turned to look at Linley, her hair was swept up by the night wind.

A dazzling smile, and then she left.

Watching this beauty depart into the night, Linley stood there without moving, thinking who knows what.

"Big bro, what are you looking at?" Wharton walked over, laughing. "It is time for dinner."

"Your big bro feels the stirrings of spring!" Bebe's little head popped up from behind Linley.

Night descended, but the entire imperial capital was filled with lights. Right now, in the imperial palace, a huge banquet had been prepared, and the palace musicians were performing beautiful songs. Men and women were displaying their graceful dance steps in the middle of the hall.

Delia was seated in a seat next to a wall of the main hall. Next to her was the Wildthunder Stormhawk. She was the guest of honor today. After all, this banquet was for the sake of welcoming her.

But aside from exchanging a few polite words with Emperor Johann, and singing a few words to a beautiful song, Delia claimed that she wasn't feeling well and went off to one side to rest.

A handsome young noble walked over to Delia, a smile that he probably thought was friendly on his face. Bowing slightly, he said, "Beautiful Ms. Delia, might I have the honor of asking you to a dance?"

"I'm sorry, I'm not feeling very well." Delia shook her head.

The young noble left regretfully. Not feeling well? Who was she trying to fool? Many girls who didn't want to accept an offer to dance would say this. What's more, Delia was a magus of the seventh rank. How could she so easily become ill?

From afar, quite a few young nobles were staring at Delia.

"What number is he?" Scott laughed towards a nearby young noble.

"The eighth." The young noble laughed.

"The eighth what?" Marquis Jeff, who had just finished a dance, laughed as he walked over. Right now, Marquis Jeff was in a splendid mood.

Indeed, as Marquis Jeff was the son of Prince Julin. As his heir, Marquis Jeff would one day be the controller of the entire Southeast Administrative Province! His status was very high, even higher than a prince who wasn't in line for the imperial throne. Naturally, many young noble ladies were desirous of becoming his wife.

Unfortunately, although many young noble ladies had been bedded by Marquis Jeff, none of them had gotten anything.

"I was talking with his Imperial Highness regarding Ms. Delia. This is already the eighth person to ask Ms. Delia to dance, only to be refused. It seems the others have lost confidence. No one else dares to go invite her." The young noble laughed.

Scott laughingly looked at Marquis Jeff. "What, cousin Jeff, do you wish to try?"

Marquis Jeff nodded confidently. "It's just a dance, right? Watch me." Marquis Jeff smiled as he walked over towards Delia, smiled quite brightly.

"Ms. Delia." Marquis Jeff walked in front of her. "Might I have the honor of asking you to a dance?"

"I'm sorry. I'm not feeling well." Delia gave the same response.

Marquis Jeff very naturally sat down next to her, maintaining a practiced degree of distance between the two of them. Although the distance between the two wasn't very far, it wasn't so close as to be threatening.

"If you aren't feeling well, you should rest." Marquis Jeff, being quite experienced, knew exactly how he should approach this sort of situation. If one was able to get into physical contact with a girl, it would be easier for the two to feel more intimate with each other.

As to how to get into physical contact...

"Oh, Ms. Delia, your shoulder has some..." As he spoke, Marquis Jeff reached out with his hand towards Delia's shoulder.

But before he could get the word 'dust' out of his mouth...

"Ah!!!" Marquis Jeff let out an agonized scream. That scream stunned the main hall, and everyone turned to look at him. Even the distant Emperor Johann, who was chatting with the Imperial Left Premier, had their attention drawn to them.

“What just happened?” Emperor Johann immediately walked over.

“My hand! My hand!” Marquis Jeff was almost crying. A large wound had appeared on his hand, and a large chunk of flesh was missing. Blood was flowing nonstop, staining the floor.

Delia hurriedly stood up. “Emperor Johann, my apologies. Teacher instructed his Wildthunder Stormhawk to protect me. The Wildthunder Stormhawk will attack anything which touches my body in a manner it deems threatening. Before I even had a chance to react, the Wildthunder Stormhawk immediately pecked at him.”

Everyone looked at the Wildthunder Stormhawk.

The Wildthunder Stormhawk was dangling a chunk of flesh off its beak, which was stained with blood. The Wildthunder Stormhawk swallowed that chunk of flesh in one gulp, then stared death at Marquis Jeff with its two golden hawk eyes.

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“The Wildthunder Stormhawk will attack anything which touches my body in a manner it deems threatening.” These words seemed very simple, but all of the nobles present were extremely intelligent. They immediately realized what had happened when they heard Delia say this.

All of the nobles turned to stare at Marquis Jeff, who was currently clutching his wounded hand. His face was pale and very ugly to behold.

“This Marquis Jeff actually tried to make a physical move on her. Jeeze...” Many nobles secretly cursed him in silence. Although they didn’t speak aloud, it was only natural that their gazes would convey their thoughts. Marquis Jeff felt extremely awkward.

Emperor Johann glanced at his nephew with dissatisfaction as well.

He knew that the Wildthunder Stormhawk behind Delia was a magical beast of the ninth rank belonging to her wind-style Grand Magus Saint teacher, Master Longhaus. Most likely, Delia really was unable to react to the Wildthunder Stormhawk’s attack on Marquis Jeff, and in turn the Wildthunder Stormhawk was unable to speak with Delia.

A situation like this most likely wasn’t a result of Delia intentionally acting against Marquis Jeff.

Indeed...

Delia hadn't intentionally acted against Marquis Jeff. Before arriving at the banquet, Delia had already told the Wildthunder Stormhawk that if anyone wished to try and make a physical move on her, the Wildthunder Stormhawk was to 'peck' them in punishment.

None of the other young nobles had dared to make a physical move on her, but Marquis Jeff did. Naturally, he was the one who took the spear in the belly.

"Attend me! Take Jeff to the healers." Emperor Johann snapped an order to his servants.

Marquis Jeff didn't try to explain, only hanging his head while holding his hand, with that astonishingly large hole in it. He rapidly left the main hall. Only then did Emperor Johann say comfortingly to Delia, "Ms. Delia, sincere apologies that you had to experience something like this. This was our fault. We hope you won't be too upset."

"No, no. Emperor Johann, this was Little Wind's mistake. When I go back, I'll definitely ask Teacher to rebuke him." As she spoke, she intentionally 'glared' at the Wildthunder Stormhawk.

And then, Delia said apologetically, "Emperor Johann, I'm not feeling very well today. I'll go home now. I hope you will forgive me."

"That's a good idea. Ms. Delia, when you get back, you need to have a good rest." Emperor Johann said in a very gentlemanly manner.

With the guest of honor, Delia, having left, the other nobles began to buzz and chatter. Poor Marquis Jeff, naturally, became the center of their gossip.

After this event and after having his wound healed by light-style magic, Marquis Jeff actually fearlessly and shamelessly went to serve as a 'guide' for Delia, and Eighth Imperial Prince Scott accompanied him as well.

But unfortunately...

Although Ms. Delia was very friendly, those two magical beasts were terrifying.

Once, when Ms. Delia stumbled while walking, as she was about to fall, Prince Scott reached out with 'good intentions' to help steady Delia by embracing her. Welcoming him, however, was a peck from the Wildthunder Stormhawk. This time,

the injury was even more severe than Marquis Jeff's, as a hole was pecked straight through Prince Scott's right hand.

After this experience, both Scott and Marquis Jeff learned their lessons and no longer dared to reach out with their hands. But just as they thought they were being nice and proper, misfortune came again.

That Worldbear suddenly stretched out its two palms and sent both Scott and Marquis Jeff flying into the air.

How terrifyingly strong were the paws of a Worldbear? Even a casual slap from the Worldbear was enough to injure Scott and Marquis Jeff to the point of vomiting blood. They were beaten to the brink of death, but fortunately, light-style magi were there to heal them.

This is what the Worldbear, Hatton, said to them: "You two keep swaggering around every day in front of me, Lord Hatton. You are so motherf*cking annoying. In the future, every time I see you, I'll beat you!"

Good heavens!

Who would dare anger a Saint-level Worldbear? Even for the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, defeating a Worldbear wouldn't be a simple task. After all, a Worldbear was definitely a top-class magical beast, even amongst Saint-level magical beasts. If it hadn't been that Master Longhaus' Dimensional Edge spell was simply too terrifyingly powerful, how could he possibly have subdued such a creature?

Having learned their lessons, Scott and Marquis Jeff no longer dared to bother Ms. Delia again.

Those other young nobles of the imperial capital who had ambitious designs on Ms. Delia, seeing the disasters which had befallen Marquis Jeff and Prince Scott, no longer dared to try anything. There was nothing for it. If they were swatted to death by that Saint-level Worldbear, they wouldn't even have a chance to cry.

Emperor Johann, while chatting with Delia, finally learned that Delia had actually been classmates of the same year with Master Linley at the Ernst Institute. In addition, Delia was in no hurry to return to the Yulan Empire, and was planning to stay and watch the duel in the O'Brien Empire between Linley and the Monolithic Sword Saint.

Emperor Johann naturally was very welcoming and magnanimous.

Although a stay of several months from a foreign Special Envoy was quite long, Emperor Johann expressed welcome to her, saying that the longer she stayed, the better.

Time passed, and in the blink of an eye, nearly three months had passed. Tomorrow was August 4th. Countless people in the imperial capital were discussing the upcoming Saint-level duel. Even the towns outside the imperial capital were beginning to fill up with people who had come from distant places.

This was because there were simply too many people coming to watch this duel. The imperial capital was totally full.

On Boulder Street. Count Wharton's estate. Hillman and Housekeeper Hiri were drinking wine and chatting idly.

"Uncle Hiri, have you noticed that recently, at mealtime, Linley smiles a lot more than usual, and often cracks jokes." Hillman's face was all smiles.

Housekeeper Hiri's ruddy nose was as red as ever. He chortled as well. "Hillman, I imagine you know the reason why as well. Ms. Delia comes to visit young master Linley every day. How can young master Linley not be happy? As I see it, this Ms. Delia is a fine young lady. And I feel that Ms. Delia is interested in young master Linley."

"Right. When Ms. Delia eats with us, I recognize that look in her eyes when she looks at young master Linley." Hillman spoke with the air of experience.

Hillman and Housekeeper Hiri were both quite satisfied with Delia.

However...

"But young master Linley himself always dodges this topic. I've raised it with him several times." Hillman shook his head helplessly.

"No rush. As long as both of them are willing, when the time is right, they'll definitely get together." Housekeeper Hiri was actually quite confident.

Right at this time, Wharton, Barker, and his siblings all came from the back courtyard's training fields. Those six massive bodies formed an amazing sight.

"Grandpa Hiri. Uncle Hillman." Wharton called out to them from far away.

As soon as Wharton entered the living room. "Eh? My big brother and Ms. Delia haven't arrived yet." Right now, every day, Delia would come have lunch with Linley.

"They'll be here soon. Don't be impatient." Hillman said.

"They are here." Gates, who was at the back, turned his head and saw Linley walk in alongside Delia, both dressed in light blue robes. The Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, was behind them, while Bebe was standing on Haeru's back.

Both dressed in light blue robes, the natural, at-ease Linley and the beautiful, moving Delia did appear to be a match made in heaven indeed.

"Big bro, time to eat. You're still busy chatting? Don't you think you've chatted enough?" Wharton's loud voice boomed out.

Linley and Delia looked at Wharton, and Wharton laughed while shaking his head.

Yulan calendar, year 10009. August 4th. Afternoon. Today, the weather was excellent. The sky was pure blue, with only a few clouds in the sky. The wind wasn't too strong, and the soft wind gently blew comfortably against everyone's faces, as gentle as the caress of a lover's hand.

West of the city. Mt. Tujiao!

This was a small mountain that was only around a thousand meters high, and a few thousand square meters in area. It wasn't a large mountain. Compared to War God Mountain, it was far smaller. Today, however, the area surrounding the mountain had already been divided into countless regions by various painted lines. Over a hundred thousand city guards were there maintaining order as well.

There was an extremely high number of spectators here today, even more than during that last duel between Olivier and Haydson. Although many people had come, with those millions of people all divided into one region after another, it was quite orderly, with each region having an army regiment standing guard.

Mt. Tujiao didn't have any people on the mountain itself. But in the air above Mt. Tujiao, Linley stood in mid-air!

Even the nobles stood several hundred meters away from the base of Mt. Tujiao, with the city guards maintaining a perimeter.

Wharton, Barker, and his brothers naturally were in the front, quite close to Emperor Johann. As for Delia and Master Longhaus, they were quite close to Wharton's group.

Wharton and Delia both raised their heads, staring at Linley's figure with concern.

"My big bro will definitely win." Wharton murmured silently to himself.

Master Longhaus gently patted Delia on her shoulders. Delia looked towards her teacher, her eyes slightly red. Delia felt tremendous mental pressure.

"It'll be fine. Linley will be fine." Master Longhaus said comfortingly.

"He definitely will be fine." Delia said softly to herself, as she looked up towards Mt. Tujiao again.

"F*ck, why hasn't that Haydson come yet?" Gates cursed angrily. He didn't care about the Monolithic Sword Saint at all, and cursed as he pleased.

Right now, Wharton, Housekeeper Hiri, Hillman, Delia, Barker and his brothers, Jenne, Rebecca, and Leena...all of them were quietly hoping and praying for Linley's victory.

"For Linley to win will be very hard." A gray-robed figure suddenly appeared next to them.

"Olivier?" Wharton and Gates stared at this man in astonishment.

Olivier had come back to life!

Olivier's face was ashen pale, but his aura was even more restrained than before. Blumer was standing by his side. Olivier glanced at Wharton, then said calmly, "That Haydson's defense is extremely powerful, and his attack force is very astonishing as well. You should remember how when I fought him, my arm broke from aiming a single sword blow at him. His strength far exceeds mine. In addition, his spiritual energy is very powerful, and he is also very fast...he is essentially flawless. Beating him will be hard."

"Olivier, our Lord is not you." Gates said unhappily.

Olivier laughed calmly and fell silent. He walked with his younger brother to a different area, quietly awaiting the coming battle.

"Lord Haydson has arrived!" A surprised shout came from somewhere within that endless sea of humanity.

Everyone turned to stare at a figure that was flying over at high speed from the east. In the blink of an eye, Haydson appeared in the air above Mt. Tujiao, standing opposite from Linley.

Right now, Linley and Haydson were only a thousand meters off the ground.

The dwellers of the Yulan continent all had good eyesight. In broad daylight, they could clearly make out these two figures who were a thousand meters away.

Delia's hands were balled into tight fists, and her palms were sweaty.

At this moment, none of the millions of spectators surrounding Mt. Tujiao made any noise. It seemed as though they were all holding their breaths, as they all felt an incredible pressure.

Everyone's gaze was fixed on those two figures high up in the air.

"Linley, you arrived rather early." Haydson said casually as he stood in mid-air.

Linley just looked at him calmly. A gentle wind surrounded him. Linley was currently in his human form. The reason he was able to fly was because he had already utilized the wind-style spell of the ninth rank, Windshadow.

The Soaring Technique was a spell of the seventh rank, while the Airwings spell was a spell of the eighth rank. The Windshadow spell of the ninth rank combined the Airwings spell with the Supersonic spell. When using this spell, not only could one fly, one would also possess astonishing speed.

Linley casually removed his outer garments, collecting them into his interspatial ring, then stared coldly at Haydson. "Haydson, let's cut the crap. Prepare to fight." As he spoke, Linley's body quickly began to be covered with black scales, and those sharp spikes appeared from his elbows, knees, forehead, and spine. That iron-whip-like tail swung about behind him, and those dark gold eyes stared coldly at Haydson.

"Oh, how refreshingly blunt. Come, then...let's see if you are qualified to make me draw my sword!" The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, looked at Linley with confidence, and he laughed calmly as he spoke in a bright voice.

Chapter 32

Linley and Haydson stood there in mid-air, staring at each other from over a few hundred meters apart. Naturally, they used battle-qi to speak to each other, and their voices were very loud. The viewers below could hear their words clearly.

"How arrogant!" Wharton frowned.

"F*ck his grandmother, when his Lordship beats him to the point of being unable to fight back, this Haydson will know how ignorant and sheltered he is." Gates cursed unhappily.

Although most of the spectators below felt Haydson was arrogant, they also knew...that Haydson had the power to be arrogant. After all, he was the Monolithic Sword Saint, famous for his defense!

In mid-air.

The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, finished his words, and the area around him became covered with those earthen swirls of energy. The density of that roiling energy had reached a terrifying density and power.

"Force you to draw your sword?" Linley's lips curved upwards.

"Bang!" A dense azurish-black battle-qi exploded forth from Linley's body, surrounding Linley like a thick black swirling fog. But compared to Haydson's, the protective energy around Linley actually made one's heart rate change. It contained within it some sort of strange vibrational pulse.

"Oh?" Staring at Linley's Pulseguard Defense, Haydson's eyes lit up. He immediately stared carefully at Linley and laughed, "Linley, I didn't realize that when you dueled with Olivier, you had been hiding this ability. I confess...you are qualified to make me draw my sword."

Haydson was extremely experienced.

Although Linley's Pulseguard Defense was different from his, the power of his defense was definitely not any inferior than Haydson's. Just based on this astonishing defensive power, Haydson had to draw his sword!

"Clang!" Haydson drew his earthen colored heavy sword from the sheath on his back, staring steadily at Linley.

With a flip of his hand, that adamantite heavy sword appeared in his hands, glowing with that faint blue light. He immediately adopted a ready position, prepared to deliver a fierce blow at any moment.

“He drew his sword. Lord Haydson drew his sword.”

The heartbeats of the millions of spectators increased in speed. Olivier frowned. “Linley’s defense. It seems...to be rather special. I didn’t expect that he had been hiding this ability.”

Delia was so nervous that her forehead was covered with sweat, but she didn’t notice it at all.

One was surrounded by earth-colored energy, while the other was surrounded by azurish-black energy. The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, looked like a wargod of the earth, while Linley looked like a demon from another dimension, making those who saw him feel fear.

“Careful!” Linley let out a cold shout, then he moved.

“Boom!” The gentle wind suddenly transformed into a howling tempest which filled the skies. Linley’s body suddenly blurrily merged with the wind which began to blow around the entire Mt. Tujiao. “Crack!” A tree was shattered in half by the force of the wind, and many other trees began to bend as well. Leaves were blown everywhere into the sky, and countless leaves and pebbles were swirling about in the air above Mt. Tujiao.

Everyone below scrunched their eyes, carefully watching this oncoming battle.

“He’s actually reached such a high level of understanding with regards to the Elemental Laws of the Wind.” The wind-style Grand Magus Saint, Longhaus, sighed quietly in praise as his eyes lit up.

The others all watched the battle with baited breath.

The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, wielding his earthen heavy sword in his hands, stood arrogantly in mid-air. He seemed as stable as a mountain, despite the wind howling about him. Linley’s body could be blurrily seen at multiple places throughout that wild wind.

“Hooooowl!”

Suddenly, a bizarre, bestial howl could be heard as a black blur suddenly charged towards Haydson. Haydson’s face changed. Linley’s speed was simply too fast. Because his speed had reached a certain limit, the wind itself had howled in rage.

The only thing Haydson saw was Linley’s two dark golden eyes. They stared at each other.

"Hrmph!" Haydson wasn't afraid at all.

"Haaaaaaargh!"

"Haaaaaaargh!"

Two angry roars rang out at the same time. The adamantine heavy sword howled with the wind, carrying tremendous force as it chopped down towards Haydson. But Haydson's earthen heavy sword seemed to carry the force of a mountain as it swung towards Linley.

The two swords collided!

"BANG!!!"

It was as though two mountains had collided. The terrifying power of that collision produced waves of energy that one could see with the naked eye. Those waves of energy were knife-sharp, and the trees directly beneath the battle on Mt. Tujiao were split apart. Some boulders were chopped into rubble, while countless rocks and pebbles blasted in all directions.

"Your Imperial Majesty, careful!"

A boulder actually smashed down directly towards Emperor Johann's direction. Immediately, warriors charged towards it, kicking that ten-thousand pound boulder away. One powerful warrior after another protected each of the nobles. Many of the spectators were powerful warriors, and some were magi.

"Everyone, be careful!" Those spectators were all stunned.

This power was simply too terrifying.

"Linley!" Seeing Linley's Dragonblood Warrior transformation and his astonishing strength, Delia felt pride for the person she was in love with.

Linley and Haydson both retreated nearly a hundred meters.

"What astonishing strength." Linley felt shocked. When he had dueled against Olivier, Linley had only used Bloodviolet and therefore had not shown off his incredible strength. After all, Dragonblood Warriors were famous for their strength! When using the adamantine heavy sword, he was able to put his terrifying, earth-shaking power on full display.

“Dragonblood Warriors live up to their reputation as Supreme Warriors.” Haydson laughed loudly. “But Linley, just now, I only used pure strength and none of the Laws. You need to be careful of my next attack.”

For example, that ‘Worldbreaker’ attack Haydson had used last time contained the insights he had gained into the Laws of the Earth.

The power of that attack had increased tremendously as a result.

“With my next technique, I too shall use my Profound Truths of the Earth. You be careful as well.” Linley looked calmly at the distant Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson.

In this battle, he definitely couldn’t hold anything back. If he held back but the opponent didn’t, he would probably die.

“His Lordship is about to use the Profound Truths of the Earth.” Barker, his brothers, and Wharton all grew nervous. Bebe and Haeru both exchanged glances. Haeru had shrunken his size dramatically today, which was very rare for him.

“Swoosh!”

While everyone stared upwards into the sky, Bebe and Haeru scurried towards Mt. Tujiao, moving as fast as lightning. These two magical beasts quickly arrived at the tip of Mt. Tujiao, and in the blink of an eye, Bebe and Haeru hid within some of the wild grass at the mountain top.

“We’ll watch from here. If the Boss wins, that’s fine. If the Boss loses and that Haydson continues to go full force on him, then it’ll be time for us to charge.” Bebe stared evilly at the mid-air Haydson.

Haeru nodded as well.

Last time, Olivier had nearly lost his life. Haeru and Bebe didn’t want to see that scene repeat itself.

Linley was wielding the adamantine heavy sword while the battle-qi in his body began to rise rapidly, and his power quickly grew. The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, was building his power as well.

The two experts were preparing to use their ultimate techniques.

“Boom!” “Boom!”

Terrifying sonic booms rang out as two blurs slashed through the air. In the blink of an eye, those two experts slammed into each other like two massive colliding meteors.

“Profound Truths of the Earth – Hundred Layered Waves!” Linley’s dark golden eyes grew even colder, and his adamantite heavy sword floated as agilely as a soft breeze, having attained a bizarrely fast speed, as though it was passing through reality itself.

“Worldquake!” Haydon’s face was very solemn, and the light covering his earthen heavy sword grew even more concentrated, and the heavens and the earth in the area around them began to congeal and solidify.

“Bang!”

The earthen heavy sword collided against the adamantite heavy sword. This collision was very strange. Linley was smashed downwards from the skies like a meteor, falling downwards at extreme speed. Only after falling several hundred meters did he manage to somersault and then halt his descent.

Linley could sense that the flow of blood in his body had been disrupted and was roiling about.

“What terrifying attack power.” Linley stared in amazement at the mid-air Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson. Linley’s Pulseguard Defense was extremely powerful, several dozen times more powerful than the normal battle-qi armor which protected most Saints. Such a terrifying defense was generally immune to the attacks of most Law-based techniques of peak-stage Saints.

Linley’s defense was not one bit weaker than Haydson’s.

But despite that, Haydson’s Worldquake technique was simply too terrifying. It was as though the weight of an entire enormous mountain had concentrated itself onto Haydson’s sword as it chopped down against Linley. It had broken through Linley’s Pulseguard Defense, exhausting the majority of its power as it did so, but Linley was just barely able to defend against that remaining amount of power via his draconic scales.

“This Monolithic Sword Saint’s attack power actually contains a hint of similarity to my Profound Truths of the Earth.” Linley could sense that Haydson’s Worldquake technique actually carried a bit of vibrational power as well; only, there was but a single vibrational wave.

A single vibrational wave was only capable of causing the blood in Linley's body to be roiled and disturbed.

"His insight into the Throbbing Pulse of the World is quite low."

The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, didn't actually focus on the Throbbing Pulse of the World when training in the Laws of the Earth. He had gone a different way.

"I imagine Haydson isn't feeling too well right now either." Linley stared upwards at Haydson.

"Urgh!" Haydson's body trembled, a hint of blood leaking out from his lips as he stared down at Linley in astonishment.

When the adamantine heavy sword had intersected with his earthen heavy sword, at first he hadn't felt any force at all. But then, a strange vibration passed into his body through the sword, and Haydson felt as though countless warhammer-like blows were smashing into his internals. In the blink of an eye, he had been struck by a hundred vibrations.

"Fortunately, I've reached a certain degree of mastery into the 'Massive' aspect of the Laws of the Earth, which fortified both my soul and my internals. Otherwise...this attack by itself probably would've taken my life."

Haydson's defense was very powerful indeed.

Not only was his external defense formidable, his spirit and his internal organs were protected as well. After all, the earth was the mother to us all. The path Haydson had chosen was a path of extreme defense and extreme offensive power.

If Linley had used fifty layered vibrational waves to attack Haydson, he probably wouldn't have been able to injure Haydson at all. But Linley had used the Hundred Layered Waves attack. No matter how strong Haydson's defense had been, he had still been injured.

One stood in mid-air above Mt. Tujiao. The other stood in mid-air, halfway down Mt. Tujiao. The two stared at each other, both sensing how powerful the other was.

"What a terrifying attack." Haydson felt terror in his heart. This was the first time he had experienced such a bizarre attack.

"What astonishing defense, and what terrifying strength." Linley, seeing that the opponent had received his 'Hundred Layered Waves' head on without dying, also felt stunned.

Below them was a sea of silence. Nobody knew what the result had been between this clash of experts.

“Haha...Linley, wonderful. You are the first Saint to cause me to be heavily injured.” Haydson’s voice rang out brightly, but then it grew seriously. “But now, I’ll no longer hold back anything. Prepare to receive my Worldbreaker attack. If you die, don’t blame me!”

Watching from below, Olivier’s face changed. Last time, it had been the Worldbreaker technique which had nearly taken his life.

The Worldbreaker technique was far more terrifying than the Worldquake technique.

“It remains to be seen who shall be the one to die!” Linley said coldly, his voice also ringing in the skies.

In truth, Linley had already reached the level of being able to generate 132 layers of waves. Just then, Linley had only utilized the Hundred Layered Waves, but that wasn’t Linley’s limit.

“Boom!”

“Boom!”

Two sonic booms once more split the air, as these two ultimate experts charged towards each other in mid-air. One flew upwards at high speed, while the other charged downwards. These two experts collided with tremendous force at the outskirts of Mt. Tujiao.

Worldbreaker!

Profound Truths of the Earth – 132 Layered Waves!

The absolute most powerful attacks of these two experts!

“Bang!” Linley’s body was actually slammed into the side of Mt. Tujiao itself, creating a giant crater. “Crack!” “Crack!” Instantly, the entire mountain began to crack, and with a rumbling noise, countless boulders began to fall and trees began to split apart. As the boulders came tumbling down towards them, many of the spectators below immediately began to block them.

“Boom!” Linley came charging out from within the deep crater. His body was stained with blood, and even parts of his draconic scales were shattered.

The power of the Worldbreaker technique was many times higher than the Worldquake technique. Linley had taken this attack head on, but despite being protected by two layers of defense, the Pulseguard Defense and his draconic scales, he had still been heavily wounded and vomited blood.

“Paaargh!”

Haydson’s throat convulsed, and he vomited out a large mouthful of fresh blood, his face instantly turning white. Both of these mighty Saints were now covered with blood.

The battle had reached a desperate point!

Chapter 33

The millions of spectators below were stunned. Haydson had vomited blood, while Linley’s shattered scales were covered with bloodstains. Clearly, this battle was growing extremely desperate.

“How is this possible?”

“How is this possible...Master Linley and Lord Haydson...”

The countless spectators were all stunned. These two dominating experts had actually battled to such a point. What was truly shocking was...the reputed most powerful of Saints, Haydson, had vomited a large mouthful of blood. Clearly he had been deeply injured.

As they saw it, Linley was only twenty seven, despite being a genius.

But wasn’t Linley previously just on par with Olivier? Olivier had been defeated by Haydson, and Linley should’ve suffered the same fate. But clearly, the results were totally different.

“Linley, he...” Olivier’s forehead was locked into a frown. He fell silent.

Actually, if Linley hadn’t gained insight into his Pulseguard Defense, most likely the Worldquake technique of Haydson would have badly injured him, and the Worldbreaker should have directly killed him. But now that Linley had his Pulseguard Defense, his protective abilities were extremely high. Even when Haydson used his ultimate technique, he could only badly injure Linley at most.

“Linley!” Delia was at the point of tears.

Especially when she saw Linley’s body covered with bloodstains, her heart quivered.

“Big bro.” “Lord!” Wharton, the Barker brothers, Housekeeper Hiri, Hillman, Jenne and the other girls...all of them were worried for Linley.

The battle had truly reached a desperate state.

“What a bizarre attack. There is no way to defend against it at all.” Haydson stared at the distant, demonic-looking Linley, thinking at high speed.

Profound Truths of the Earth – 132 Layered Waves!

Even Haydson, whose internal organs were under special protection, had been heavily injured. Haydson knew very well that he could perhaps endure a single additional blow from his opponent’s ultimate attack, but if he were to be hit a third time, he would definitely perish.

“How could Linley’s defense be so powerful? My Worldbreaker attack was unable to kill him.” Haydson couldn’t believe it.

He hadn’t met any opponent who would dare take his attack head on. The Worldbreaker was his ultimate attack. If he wasn’t capable of killing his opponent with it, how would he win?

“I can’t take another one head on. I’ll have to rely on my speed to try and avoid his attack while landing mine on him.” Haydson decided. He believed that Linley wouldn’t be much better off than him. It was already incredible that Linley would still be battle-worthy after having taken his Worldbreaker attack. He trusted that so long as he was able to land another Worldbreaker, Linley definitely wouldn’t be able to take it.

Haydson’s thoughts were actually mirrored by Linley’s own.

Given his current condition, he definitely couldn’t take another attack head on.

“Shudder...” The earthen flows of energy surrounding Haydson began to contract, forming a thinner, almost armor-like layer around him.

Linley was also retracting the area of his Pulseguard Defense.

If the defense was too spread out, their high speed flying maneuvers would be impacted. Without question, for both experts to do this meant that they were about to engage in a battle of agility.

The countless spectators below all stared in the sky, barely breathing.

Those people who had been absolutely certain that the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, would win, no longer dared to say anything anymore.

“Whoosh!” “Whoosh!” Hurricane like winds once more split the sky open, and Linley’s body once again began to move in that graceful, bizarre manner. His speed had reached its absolute limit. Relying on the force of the wind, Linley’s movements were extremely bizarre and totally unpredictable.

Wielding his earthen heavy sword, Haydson moved as well. With each step he took, he seemed to teleport, traversing tens of meters. His movements were bizarre as well!

“Swiiish.”

Haydson’s earthen heavy sword suddenly appeared in front of Linley, chopping down at him. But it passed through ‘Linley’ as though Linley was nothing but air. This ‘Linley’ turned into a blur and disappeared. It was just an after-image.

“Swish!” The adamantite heavy sword struck out as well.

But as it neared Haydson’s body, Haydson suddenly appeared several dozen meters away.

Both of these experts knew how formidable the other’s attacks were. They didn’t dare to take them on head on, and they all desired to use their agility to allow themselves to deliver a vicious blow towards their opponent.

“Where are they?”

“We can’t even see them!”

Those countless viewers stared carefully at the skies, but Linley and Haydson were simply moving too fast. With the wind howling as ferociously as it was, they could only occasionally see a solid blur.

Delia’s forehead was covered in sweat, but she still stared unblinkingly at the heavens.

The atmosphere was incredibly tense!

With a single step, Haydson appeared at the top of Mt. Tujiao. Haydson had decided to use the boulders and trees of Mt. Tujiao to serve as cover and restrict Linley’s speed.

“Whoosh!”

Linley charged downwards at high speed, heading straight towards Haydson.

With a single step, Haydson moved a great distance, and with a second step, he appeared behind a giant boulder. Linley was currently located on the opposite side of the boulder.

“Worldbreaker!”

The earthen heavy sword chopped down with boundless power. That man-sized boulder split apart as easily as tofu, shattering into pebbles as soon as the energy surrounding the heavy sword touched it. Linley, however, had already retreated at high speed, having sensed that the situation had turned dangerous.

“Bang!”

The entire Mt. Tujiao suddenly had a terrifying large crack which was hundreds of meters long appear in the mountain itself, with the crack three or four meters wide. Countless stones rained down in every direction.

“God!” The millions of spectators were stunned.

They saw how, before their very eyes, an enormous crack had appeared in the mountain itself. The thousand meter tall mountain had been half-split!

“Boom!” Linley struck out once more with his Profound Truths of the Earth – 132 Layered Waves, chopping at Haydson.

Haydson once more dodged.

Linley’s heavy sword struck on a nearby tree. “Rumble.” With a bizarre sound, the tree turned into dust, while at the same time, the vibrations from the adamantine heavy sword’s chop travelled in a straight line from the top of the mountain to the center of the mountain, and then expanded outwards.

“Rumble...”

In the middle of the mountain, a man sized tunnel began to appear, and countless crushed rocks came flowing out from within it. Those rocks had been completely crushed to dust, to the point where they floated upwards into the wind, covering the entire mountain with dust.

In the blink of an eye...

A tunnel that passed straight from the top of the mountain to the center of the mountain could clearly be seen by the countless spectators.

The countless spectators were deathly quiet.

Emperor Johann's throat clenched twice.

Good heavens. What sort of terrifying power was this? Who could possibly withstand a single blow from these two? One sword split half the mountain, while the other bore a tunnel straight through it, turning the stone into dust. This was simply inconceivable.

"That's the Profound Truths of the Earth!" Barker and the others were excited, but at the same time, they were alarmed by the astonishing power of the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson.

Olivier silently watched everything.

The wind blew wildly. Linley, hiding his body within the wind, would constantly appear in multiple places. As for Haydson, he continued to dodge nonstop in that bizarre method. The spectators below only heard those nonstop powerful exploding sounds, followed by the sound of boulders splitting apart and trees either exploding or disintegrating.

"Boom!" Part of the mountain peak was actually split off and sent flying downwards. Tumbling down the mountainside, countless trees were split apart in its path, and the spectators below began to cry in alarm.

Kenyon of the War God's College, one of the spectating Saints, immediately went forward. With a sweep of his sturdy staff, he borrowed the force of the titanic rock and sent it flying towards an empty space at the base of the mountain. Only then did the nearly hundred-meter wide rock roll away.

"Retreat! Retreat!"

The soldiers of the army immediately issued orders, directing the spectators to begin retreating. The imperial clan and the nobles began to retreat as well. Good heavens, this battle was far more than they had thought it would be. At such a close distance, it would be simply too dangerous.

Everyone began to retreat.

Linley and Haydson's battle grew more and more frantic and more and more reckless. With just three or four full force sword chops, Haydson had all but

chopped the entire Mt. Tujiao into several pieces, while Linley's attacks were causing Mt. Tujiao to split apart. Soon...

"Rumble..."

Mt. Tujiao simply couldn't sustain the damage anymore. The utterly ravaged Mt. Tujiao collapsed, sending countless amounts of dust flying everywhere. The spectators immediately began to retreat, frightened. Fortunately, they had already retreated earlier, and they had multiple Saints protecting them.

After the dust and rubble settled down, a field of rubble roughly two or three hundred meters high appeared in front of them.

Mt. Tujiao was gone!

All that was left was an enormous pile of rubble!

"Good heavens!" The countless spectators stared at the two people standing above the rubble. Linley and Haydson were both covered with blood, and their faces were pale. But their auras were still incredibly fierce.

None of the viewers would ever be able to forget this battle. Regardless of who would be the winner or who would die, they wouldn't think for an instant that the loser was weak or had performed poorly.

"Linley, you lose!" Haydson stared coldly at Linley.

Linley's dark golden eyes stared silently at Haydson.

"Even after you Dragonform, your battle-qi is weaker than mine. After such a long, exhausting battle, your speed has already begun to slow down." Haydson said confidently.

Indeed.

In his human form, Linley was only of the ninth rank, and after Dragonforming, his battle-qi was only at the level of a mid-stage Saint. But Haydson was someone who had trained for centuries. His reservoir of battle-qi was far deeper than Linley's. After such a vigorous battle, Linley's battle-qi was almost empty. Without sufficient battle-qi to support him, his speed naturally would decrease.

Haydson's lips curved up.

“Boom!” Haydson suddenly moved. An explosive sonic boom could be heard as Haydson charged forward at high speed, while Linley also dodged at high speed, relying on his powerful Dragonform as well as the support of the Windshadow spell.

But with his battle-qi almost all gone, Linley’s speed was now slower than Haydson’s.

“Worldbreaker!” Sensing his chance, Haydson aimed a final blow at Linley.

“Shkreeeeeech!” An ear-piercing, heart-shaking screech shook the heavens, while a vicious black shadow appeared from within the rubble and charged at high speed, appearing between Linley and Haydson.

At the same time, it expanded in size.

“Bebe.” Linley was startled.

Bebe had transformed to be two meters tall and four meters long, while at the same time, he slammed his sharp claws viciously against that earthen heavy sword.

“F*ck off!” Bebe howled angrily.

“Boom!”

The earthen heavy sword and Bebe’s sharp claws collided.

Haydson was knocked flying, and he spat out a mouthful of blood. As for Bebe, he too was knocked backwards by the terrifying power of that attack.

“F*ck, that hurts!” An angry howl.

Fast as lightning, Bebe once more appeared in front of Haydson. Despite having taken the Worldbreaker attack head on, Bebe’s body only had a hint of blood on it. He hadn’t suffered a severe injury at all.

Haydson had fallen onto the ground. Seeing this freak charge towards him, he had no idea where it had come from. All he knew was...if he didn’t block, he would die.

Haydson immediately jumped to his feet.

Where had this freak come from? It had taken his Worldbreaker blow head on without injury!

“Worldbreaker!” Haydson went all out to try and preserve his life.

“Bang!”

Bebe slammed both claws directly against the earthen heavy sword, sending it flying out of Haydson’s hands. Haydson was sent flying backwards as well, and fresh blood once more spewed forth from his lips as he fell heavily to the ground.

All of the onlookers were stunned, and their mouths gaped open.

“You want to kill my Boss? You wanna die?” Bebe howled angrily as he charged forward yet again.

“Bebe, stop.” Linley immediately shouted.

“Boss, what are you doing?” Bebe turned to look at Linley. Linley glanced at Haydson. After this duel, Linley knew that Haydson actually wouldn’t be a huge threat to him in the future.

Linley shook his head, then mentally said, “Bebe, forget it.”

Bebe was extremely dissatisfied. He jumped next to that earthen heavy sword, lifted it up, then put it into his mouth. “Crunch.” “Crunch.” With two crunching sounds, he actually devoured and swallowed that earthen heavy sword.

“I, Bebe, will spare your life. I’ll eat your little toy though. Consider this your punishment.” The giant Bebe said casually as he stared down at Haydson from mid-air with two cold eyes.

“How...how is that possible?” Haydson forced himself to his feet, staring in disbelief. His sword had been forged through an alloy of countless precious materials. It wasn’t much weaker than Linley’s adamantine heavy sword, but it had actually been eaten by this magical beast.”

“Master Linley, this...this magical beast?” Emperor Johann asked from afar.

Bebe turned to stare at Emperor Johann angrily. “What? My Boss is a magus. When a magus engages in a duel, it is very normal for him to bring his magical beast companions. Why can’t I help? I, Bebe, have already been quite forbearing, since Haeru hasn’t even come out yet. Otherwise, if my Boss, myself, and Haeru were to join forces, killing Haydson would’ve been as easy as eating that sword just now. Haeru, show yourself!”

“Groooooowl.” At this time, an angry growl could be heard as another magical beast came charging out of the rubble. It also began to grow in size. It was the Blackcloud

Panther, Haeru. Haeru flew directly next to Bebe, standing in mid-air alongside Bebe as he glanced at Haydson.

Right now, both Linley and Haydson were badly injured.

But the distant, countless spectators were no longer paying any attention to them. Their attention was on these two Saint-level magical beasts that had suddenly appeared, especially that first one. The first one was too terrifying.

He had taken a hit from the Worldbreaker attack without any problems.

With a few crunchy chomps, he had eaten Haydson's personal weapon.

"Hey, Haydson, you got any issues with that?" Bebe lowered his head to scowl at Haydson.

Seeing the cold light flashing in Bebe's eyes, Haydson knew that if he were to protest strongly, Bebe would probably claw him to death. Even at full strength, it would be hard for him to win against a magical beast like Bebe, with such astonishing defense, attack, and speed. Much less now.

Haydson turned his head, maintaining his silence.

"Haydson, I admit that I lost this duel." Linley said.

Haydson glanced at Linley. In his heart, he was beginning to admire Linley. "Linley, today, actually, the two of us fought to a draw. I was able to rely on my deeper reservoir of battle-qi to take a slight advantage. As for your magical beast..."

Haydson glanced at Haeru, then looked at Bebe.

Bebe immediately stared at him. Haydson laughed bitterly. "Your magical beast is the most terrifying Saint-level magical beast I have ever seen." Hearing these words, Bebe raised his little head up arrogantly.

Chapter 34

With a flip of his hand, Linley retrieved a long robe from his interspatial ring. He returned to his human form, then put on the long robe. With a calm laugh, he said, "Bebe, Haeru, let's go back." At the same time, Linley looked at Haydson. The Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson, was looking at him as well.

Both Haydson and Linley's faces were rather pale. After this duel, both of them had suffered severe injuries, internal injuries.

These two ultimate experts both nodded slightly. And then Haydson, paying no attention to anyone else, rose into the air and flew away towards the east. He transformed into a blurred black dot, then disappeared into the eastern horizons.

Linley walked in front, with Bebe and Haeru, his two Saint-level magical beasts, behind him.

Seeing the man and his two magical beasts, Emperor Johann, Kenyon, Lanke and the others all felt great pressure. Linley and his two Saint-level magical beasts all possessed astonishing power.

"Master Linley." Emperor Johann was the first to walk forward and greet him warmly.

Linley nodded slightly, his face still rather white. "Emperor Johann, I've gained some insights as a result of this duel. I need to go back and train."

Emperor Johann was startled, but then he hurriedly said, "Alright, alright. Master Linley's training takes priority."

Linley smiled politely, then headed towards his own people. Wharton, Delia and the others immediately went forward to welcome him, and Wharton immediately gave Linley a bearhug.

"Big bro." Wharton's eyes were red, but he managed to laugh.

"Let's go. Let's go home." Linley said as he glanced at Delia. Delia's beautiful eyelashes were wet. When she had seen Linley in danger just then, Delia had cried from worry.

Linley felt a surge of warmth in his heart.

"Let's all go together." Linley laughed as he looked at Delia, who looked back at him and nodded slightly.

Linley's group immediately left. The countless bystanders all quite conscientiously parted, giving them a path out. Virtually everyone was staring at Linley with a worshipful look in their eyes. A twenty seven year old youngster could actually fight with Haydson, the reputedly strongest Saint in the continent, on such a level. And what's more, he even had two Saint-level magical beasts, one of which was so powerful that it could suppress Haydson.

“Elder brother...” Blumer looked towards his older brother, Olivier.

Olivier was publicly hailed as a prodigy, but three months ago, he had been defeated by the Monolithic Sword Saint, Haydson. Nobody blamed him for losing; after all, his opponent had been Haydson. Everyone in the Yulan continent still felt Olivier was an absolute genius.

However...

Linley was younger than him, much younger!

But the result of Linley’s duel with Haydson was clearly different. Even Haydson himself had said that if it weren’t for the fact that Linley’s battle-qi was insufficient, he wouldn’t have been able to defeat Linley.

Victory thanks to superior battle-qi?

In the eyes of many experts, that couldn’t even be considered a victory. This was because the understanding of the Elemental Laws was far more difficult than cultivating battle-qi. As long as one had sufficient time, one’s battle-qi could definitely be increased.

“Second brother, I plan to go train in the Arctic Icecap. Take care of yourself.” Olivier said calmly towards his younger brother.

“Elder brother!” Blumer stared at him, his eyes wide.

He had heard his older brother speak of the Arctic Icecap in the past. The Planar Overseer was there, along with some Saints who had hidden themselves there to train in those wild, desolate, lifeless lands.

Olivier turned his head to glance at his younger brother. “Second brother, remember. You are the younger brother of Olivier. Don’t disappoint me.”

“Right.” Blumer nodded solemnly.

Olivier smiled, and then flew into the air, streaking towards the north. His robes fluttering in the wind, and carrying those two longswords on his back, Olivier disappeared off into the horizon, heading towards the Arctic Icecap.

“Haydson, Linley...when I return, I will definitely defeat both of you!”

Olivier stared towards the north, his eyes filled with newfound resolve.

Under the direction of the army, the millions of spectators quickly dispersed in every direction. Even as they left, they all felt extremely excited and jubilant, forming small groups as they discussed today's battle.

One sword split the mountain. Another sword tunneled through it.

A thousand meter high mountain that had an area of several square miles had been turned into a giant pile of rubble.

And then, those two magical beasts had appeared.

All of these events had caused the spectators to feel uncontrollable excitement. After this duel, everyone was filled with awe towards Linley. A twenty seven year old who was able to fight so well against Haydson, and had two such incredible magical beast companions! By the looks of it, one of the magical beasts was capable of beating Haydson.

If he fought together alongside his two magical beasts, who in the Yulan continent would dare stand against them?

"It is fortunate that I had chosen Wharton. Thankfully, our ancestor, the War God, guided me." Emperor Johann let out a long sigh. "I didn't realize that Linley was this formidable. Fortunately, he's become in-laws with our imperial clan."

After this battle at Mt. Tujiao west of the imperial capital, the millions of spectators began to spread the news with astonishing speed. Soon, Linley's fame resounded throughout the world, becoming one of the most famous names in the entire Yulan continent!

He was able to fight the most powerful Saint, Haydson, to a standstill!

Only twenty seven years old!

An Arch Magus of the ninth rank!

And a grandmaster sculptor!

And what's more, he was in control of two terrifying Saint-level magical beasts, one of which was capable of defeating Haydson.

This seemed like something out of a legend. Whether as a sculptor, as a magus, or as a warrior, Linley had reached a legendary level. It was as though multiple legends had taken form.

Without question, he was an unequaled genius.

Linley's name and fame as a Saint quickly spread across the entire Yulan continent, much like how the War God's had in the distant past. With some gossipers further exaggerating these legendary events, countless youths began to set Linley as their goal and began to train all the harder!

Linley was guaranteed to leave behind a thick stroke in the history books of the Yulan continent.

What's more...Linley's glory had just begun. He was only twenty seven years old. His future prospects were unlimited!

The news of Linley's duel with Haydson quickly reached the intelligence networks of the Radiant Church, and arrived at the Sacred Isle via flying magical beast couriers.

The waves crashed against the Sacred Isle. Located in the sea, it was extremely peaceful, and within it there was the powerful force of the Radiant Church.

On the ninth floor of the Radiant Temple.

The Holy Emperor, Heidens, was quietly flipping through the treasured holy scripture of the Radiant Church. Suddenly, two rapping sounds could be clearly heard on his door.

"Come in." Heidens voice was as steady as always.

Guillermo, dressed in a long red robe, hurried in. He stared at the Holy Emperor, Heidens, and said in a serious voice, "Your Holiness, word has come regarding Linley's duel with Haydson."

Heidens raised his head to glance at Guillermo.

The look on Guillermo's face aroused Heiden's suspicions. He accepted the piece of paper from Guillermo and casually flipped through it. As he did, his previously calm expression froze.

"Your Holiness?" Guillermo said in a quiet voice.

Heidens sighed softly, then tossed the parchment onto his desk. Rising to his feet, he walked to the nearby window. Staring at the distant, boundless sea, he said, "Linley...I knew that you are a genius, but I didn't expect that in ten short years, you could have grown so much."

Long ago, Heidens had predicted that Linley would become very accomplished. Otherwise, he wouldn't have sent six Angels to kill Linley.

But who would've imagined that soon after those six Angels failed, Linley would cause such a huge stir. First, he fought Olivier to a standstill, which had already shocked the Radiant Church. But this time...

"Your Holiness, what should we do?" Guillermo asked in a low voice. "Currently, Linley is already roughly on par with Haydson."

"Haydson..."

Heidens continued staring outside the window, his back to Guillermo. "Haydson is indeed quite strong. If I wanted to defeat him, I'd have to expend quite a bit of effort."

Although Haydson was reputed to be the strongest Saint, there had been many people who had never competed against him. Aside from those experts who had been quietly training for many years, there was the Holy Emperor, the Dark Patriarch, and a number of other experts who didn't care about fame.

Oracular Magic was one of the three types of High Magic, after all.

A peak-stage Saint-level practitioner of Oracular Magic was extremely powerful, far more so than an ordinary peak-stage Saint-level Grand Magus. Heidens was confident that if he were to go all out, he would be able to defeat Haydson.

That was only if he went all out. What's more, the intelligence network had reputed that Linley also had two terrifying magical beast companions, one of whom even Haydson apparently couldn't do anything to.

"Linley has those two Saint-level magical beasts. If I and Osenno were to both attack, most likely at most we would only be able to force Linley to flee. To kill Linley...we would need to have all the experts of the Church come!" Heidens said in a low voice.

To defeat and to kill were two totally different concepts.

That combination of Linley and two magical beasts was simply too terrifying. Even the Radiant Church needed all of its most powerful experts working together in order to be confident of killing him.

"But even if we succeeded, the Radiant Church will suffer heavy losses. And the imperial capital is the territory of the War God..." A gold light flashed in Heiden's eyes.

Heidens' heart was filled with anger!

"Bam!" The glass window in front of him transformed into glass shards.

"We previously could have killed Linley, but we didn't go full force against him. But now, we no longer have a chance." Heidens looked towards Guillermo, then announced helplessly, "The price of killing Linley is simply too high. We can't afford to pay it. And what's more, we wouldn't necessarily succeed...from today onwards, no longer act against Linley. If we don't make trouble for him...I refuse to believe he would dare come and attack the Sacred Isle."

At this point, this was the only option left to the Radiant Church.

"Yes, Your Holiness." Guillermo laughed bitterly in his heart.

Guillermo couldn't help but think back to the first time he had met Linley, when he had been in a hotel within the Ernst Institute. At that time, Linley was just a hopeful future prospect.

Only ten years had passed!

That youngster had already become one of the most powerful people in the Yulan continent, and the Radiant Church could no longer do anything about him.

Heidens was frowning.

His heart was filled with hatred!

Did the Church truly lack the power to deal with Linley? No! It had the power! In addition to its high level experts such as the Holy Emperor and the Praetor, the Radiant Church actually had a number of even more terrifying people in their ranks.

These people had all been training for thousands of years, some even longer.

However...

These people no longer served the Radiant Church.

"These traitors have all forsaken the Lord and only care about themselves!" Heidens' heart was filled with anger. Those people were all extremely powerful, but none of them cared about the 'Radiant Sovereign' any longer, nor did they care about religion or worship.

This group of people had once been the pride of the Radiant Church.

They even included past Holy Emperors. But now, most likely they wouldn't even care if the Radiant Church were to be totally obliterated. The goal of these people was to become Deities!

To enter the Deity realm!

"Your Holiness?" Guillermo saw that Heidens was daydreaming and quietly called out to him.

Heidens let out a long sigh, then looked at Guillermo. He instructed, "Right, Guillermo, that Dylin of the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts dealt us a severe setback. Many followers perished...we must quickly establish ourselves in the Anarchic Lands. We must let the radiant glory of the Lord illuminate that place."

Guillermo immediately nodded.

The more followers the Lord had, the greater the gifts the Lord would bestow. The 48 Anarchic Duchies were like a piece of juicy meat which the Radiant Church had set its eyes on for a long time now. They had already been engaged in turmoil and strife for thousands of years. The Radiant Church and the Cult of Shadows both wanted to subjugate that area, but neither had been successful in their struggles to do so.

The Anarchic Lands bordered both the O'Brien Empire and the Rohault Empire, as well as the great plains to the far east which were ruled over by the ruthless steppe horsemen...

To tame the Anarchic Lands was extremely hard.

"You can go now." Heidens said calmly.

When Guillermo left, Heidens felt a certain sourness in his heart. "The Cult of Shadows. The Anarchic Lands. And Linley, who will be a great danger in the future..."

He knew that Linley would be a threat, but what could he do?

Chapter 35

The gentle wind blew softly against Linley's hair as he sat quietly in the meditative posture on the ground, his eyes shut. His soul had become one with the earth and one with the wind.

“Rumble...” Linley could sense the heat of the scorching hot magma in the depths of the earth.

“Swish...” Linley could sense the changes in the speed of the wind. In the upper atmosphere, the wind was very strong, but the wind within the imperial capital’s manors was much weaker. Linley could clearly sense all the changes of the wind.

Linley enjoyed the sensation of training. Each time he gained a new insight and each time he made a breakthrough, he felt his spirit be uplifted and be transformed!

This was a very emotional event which made his heart tremble each time.

“The War God’s words were perhaps accurate. It is good to focus one’s attention on a single path of training. The Laws of the Earth are vast and boundless, while the ‘Throbbing Pulse of the World’ should be a fairly deep, profound subset of those laws.” Linley could sense this.

Although he and Haydson both studied the Laws of the Earth, they had taken different routes.

His own vibrational attacks were clearly on a higher level than Haydson’s!

“Thruuum.” “Thruuum.” The unique rhythm and tempo of the earth totally absorbed Linley’s attention. Linley once more allowed himself to be totally submerged into it as he worked hard to understand the profound secrets hidden within it.

Ever since that battle with Haydson, Linley had become publicly acknowledged as one of the most powerful experts people knew about in the Yulan continent. He was already someone who was spoken of as being on the level of Haydson, the Holy Emperor, and the Dark Patriarch. In the imperial capital of Channe, the status of the Baruch clan had become even more extraordinary as well.

Clearly, although he had become famous, no one dared to come disturb Linley any more.

“With each new insight, I have a different sensation.” Linley opened his eyes, a smile coming unbidden to his face. Linley sighed with amazement to himself, “Even the ‘Throbbing Pulse of the World’ contains such immeasurably deep and abstruse secrets. How vast and boundless are the Laws of the Earth, then?”

No wonder it was so hard to become a Deity.

And even an incredible person such as the War God remained at the Demigod level despite five thousand years having passed.

“Big bro!” Wharton and the Barker brothers ran over.

“I knew you were coming.” Linley laughed and stood up. When he had been in tune with the earth, Linley had sensed Wharton and the others walk over.

After everyone finished lunch.

“Zassler.” Linley rose to his feet and smiled as he gestured at Zassler. He brought Zassler into his own courtyard, and the two sat down facing each other.

“Lord Linley, is there something you need?” Zassler asked questioningly.

A complicated expression was on Linley’s face. He sighed, “Zassler, you know much about the affairs of my Baruch clan.” Zassler had been here at the estate for a long time now. Naturally, he had learned everything there was to know. Zassler immediately nodded.

Linley said calmly, “My parents are both dead now, and the primary culprit is the Radiant Church. In the past, when I left the city of Hess, I swore an oath that one day, I would eradicate the Radiant Church and pull it out by its roots.”

Zassler knew of this goal of Linley’s.

Linley looked at Zassler. “I know that right now, my power is increasing steadily. What’s more, with Bebe, Haeru, and the Barker brothers...I have confidence in my ability to deal with the Radiant Church. I am preparing to start acting against the Radiant Church!”

“You are starting?” Zassler was startled.

Linley was planning to openly act against the Radiant Church?

“Linley, although it is true that our power is now quite formidable, the roots of the Radiant Church are very deep as well...” Zassler hurriedly tried to dissuade him. Although he, too, wished to destroy the Radiant Church, they had to be wise about it.

Linley smiled and waved his hand. “No, I’m not going to fight them head on yet.”

“Last time, I heard you talking about the Anarchic Lands. Didn’t you say the Radiant Church highly values that area? And that there is a lot of power there?” Linley asked.

Zassler was over eight hundred years old, and he had spent many years living in the Anarchic Lands.

“Of course they value it!”

Zassler explained in detail, “Linley, based on my understanding of the Radiant Church, aside from sacrificing pure souls to the Radiant Sovereign, the Radiant Sovereign also needs sufficient worshippers! The more worshippers they have, the more faith is generated. The Radiant Church always prattles on about ‘spreading the Lord’s light across the entire world’, precisely because of this goal.”

Linley nodded slightly.

Zassler clicked his fingernails together. “Linley, in the entire continent, the most chaotic areas are the great plains of the far east, the Anarchic Lands, and the Eighteen Northern Duchies!”

“Of those places, the Eighteen Northern Duchies are engaged in constant warfare, while the steppe riders of the great plains are famous for their savagery. Bloodlust is bred into their very bones. How could they possibly worship the Radiant Sovereign? The very nature of the steppe warriors guarantees that the Radiant Church would not be able to succeed with them.” Zassler chatted slowly. “As for the Eighteen Northern Duchies, those Eighteen Northern Duchies already worship the Frost Goddess.”

“The Frost Goddess?” Linley actually didn’t know much about the Eighteen Northern Duchies.

“Right.” Zassler nodded. “Although the Eighteen Northern Duchies engage in constant battle amongst themselves, the Frost Goddess Shrine holds absolute dominion amongst them. And the secrets of the Frost Goddess Shrine are immeasurably deep...and what’s more, the Frost Goddess Shrine isn’t ambitious, and has remained within the Eighteen Northern Duchies this entire time. Naturally, the Radiant Church wouldn’t go and provoke them and create a powerful foe.”

Linley laughed.

Linley had always wondered about this. The Eighteen Northern Duchies were located to the north of the Forest of Darkness. The only nation it bordered was the O’Brien Empire, and the area it covered was roughly that of an Administrative Province. Given the power of the O’Brien Empire, taming it shouldn’t be hard.

But why hadn’t they?

Only now did Linley understand that this had to do with the Frost Goddess Shrine.

"Since these two places are out of the question, the only place left is the Anarchic Lands!" Zassler sighed. "The Anarchic Lands are extremely chaotic. Terrifyingly chaotic."

"Chaotic? How so?"

Zassler sighed emotionally. "First of all, in the past, according to calculations, there were 48 Duchies. But the boundaries in the Anarchic Lands constantly shift. Every few years, the number of Duchies will change. Perhaps there would be fifty, or perhaps there would be forty. It is hard to say. This is the first reason why it is chaotic."

"The second reason why it is chaotic is because of their borders. They are located next to the O'Brien Empire, the Rohault Empire, and the clans of the great plains in the far east. All three of these powers have designs upon them!"

"The third reason they are chaotic is because both the Radiant Church and the Cult of Shadows have desired to hold sway over the Anarchic Lands. In these lands, both of these religions are very powerful and have great influence. The two religions are diametrically opposed, and the struggles between them persist unabated."

Listening to this, Linley couldn't help but sigh. If, given all of these conditions, the Anarchic Lands wasn't in a state of chaos, it wouldn't make any sense at all.

"There is a fourth reason why they are chaotic!" Zassler sighed with feeling. "To the north of the Anarchic Lands is the vast Forest of Darkness. The Forest of Darkness contains a multitude of magical beasts, with the total number being not much less than the Mountain Range of Magical Beasts. Every few decades, or perhaps every decade, there will be a wave of magical beasts...countless magical beasts will come from the Forest of Darkness and charge towards the Anarchic Lands. This is no ordinary disaster!"

Linley's face changed.

An explosive surge of magical beasts?

After having experienced the Apocalypse Day of the Holy Union, Linley knew exactly how terrifying a large wave of magical beasts could be. That definitely was a day of doom.

"Of course, although it is described as a wave of magical beasts, it can't compete with the 'Apocalypse Day' in terms of how terrifying that day was." Zassler laughed.

“Most of the magical beasts which come from the Forest of Darkness are middle-rank or low-rank beasts. Only very few are high ranked magical beasts. And although they are numerous, at those times, all of the Duchies in the Anarchic Lands will work together and be able to wipe out all of the magical beasts.”

Linley now understood.

If there were few high ranking magical beasts, the damage that these waves could cause would be much lower. In addition, the numbers weren't as large as when the Holy Union had been invaded. Naturally, the amount of damage which could be caused would be limited.

“Linley, but the difference between this and what happened in the Holy Union is that the wave of magical beasts coming from the Forest of Darkness doesn't just happen once. It happens every decade or every few decades, and as a result, the Anarchic Lands can never be truly at peace.” Zassler sighed.

Linley secretly sighed as well.

Due to these four reasons, the Anarchic Lands would indeed be forever chaotic.

“Although the Duchies are small, all 48 Duchies combined make up a large amount of territory. The Anarchic Lands definitely rival roughly half of the O'Brien Empire in scope. In fact, the size of the area which the Anarchic Lands covers is roughly the same size as the current Holy Union.”

Linley nodded as well.

After the Apocalypse Day, the Holy Union only had two thirds of the territory it previously held. And of course, the O'Brien Empire was a territorially vast Empire to begin with.

It made sense that the Anarchic Lands, being half the size of the O'Brien Empire, was roughly the same size as the current Holy Union.

“Such a vast territory naturally attracts the interest of the Radiant Church. The Radiant Church and the Cult of Shadows both have many experts there, and their roots are deep.”

Hearing this, Linley laughed.

How many people would the Radiant Church send to a territory which was roughly equal in size to the entire Holy Union?

"If the Radiant Church has twenty or thirty Saints, they would at least have to send five, six, or seven Saints over there." Linley said to himself.

The Sacred Isle was definitely the place where most of the Radiant Church's experts would cluster.

The Saints sent to the Anarchic Lands most likely should not be the most powerful experts the Radiant Church had.

"After my little brother's wedding, we'll head to the Anarchic Lands." Linley looked at Zassler, smiling. "Let our war against the Radiant Church commence in the Anarchic Lands."

Destroying the roots which the Radiant Church had painstakingly cultivated over thousands of years in the Anarchic Lands would definitely enrage the Radiant Church to the point of insanity.

"The Anarchic Lands?" Zassler's eyes lit up. "Excellent!"

Linley smiled. Destroying the influence which the Radiant Church had built up there over thousands of years definitely wasn't something that would be accomplished in a year or two.

"I'll spend part of my time training while spending the rest of my time dealing with them. After destroying their forces in the Anarchic Lands, I should have reached the Saint-level in my human form. By then, my understanding of the 'Throbbing Pulse of the World' should be very high as well. At that time...we can directly engage in battle against the Radiant Church."

Linley had a very clear series of plans in his mind.

They would act in accordance with these plans. They wouldn't be impatient or rash. One step at a time, they would rip out the roots of the Radiant Church.

Wharton had previously said that his mind would be too unsettled to be able to have his wedding with Nina before Linley's duel with Haydson. They had now set the date of the wedding: September 15th.

It was now the beginning of September. Both the Count's estate as well as the imperial clan were busy making preparations for this grand wedding.

The wedding banquet was far more important than the engagement banquet.

Count Wharton's estate. Linley's residence.

“Linley, our ship and our crew are planning to return to the Yulan Empire. I need to go back with my teacher.” Delia looked at Linley, her lips curving downwards as she spoke. Linley had previously been smiling, but suddenly, his smile froze.

Knowing that Delia was about to leave, Linley couldn’t help but feel a bit heartsick.

The past few months he had spent with Delia had been the most relaxed period in the past ten years of Linley’s life. Every day, he was filled with smiles.

“You are leaving?” Linley forced out a smile. “Then let me wish you a safe journey.”

Delia actually smiled. She could tell that Linley was unwilling to part with her. “However...I told my teacher that he can go back first, and that I would stay here as a private citizen.”

“Ah?!” Linley didn’t know whether to laugh or to cry.

“Are you unhappy?” Delia frowned.

“Happy, happy!” Linley hurriedly said, but then he looked solemnly at Delia. “Delia, there’s something I need to tell you.”

“What?” Delia looked expectantly at Linley.

“After my younger brother’s grand wedding, I will most likely need to go to the Anarchic Lands.” Linley said.

“Oh. Then I will go as well.” Delia didn’t hesitate in the slightest.

But just at this moment, a series of excited shouts could be heard, while a human figure rushed at high speed to Linley’s residence. From outside the door, Gates’ loud voice could be heard shouting, “Lord, my fourth brother has also broken through and reached the ninth rank!”

Of the five Barker brothers, four now had the power of Saints.

“Yet another Saint?” A smile couldn’t help but appear on Linley’s face. These five brothers were indeed capable of easily bringing people wonderful surprises.

Chapter 36

Of Barker and his brothers, at this point, Barker, Ankh, Boone, and Gates had all reached the ninth rank. After transforming, they had the power of a Saint. As for the

third brother, Hazer, he was just one small step away from reaching the ninth rank and could break through at any moment. Of the five brothers, Barker, Gates, and Hazer had already mastered the art of 'wielding something heavy as though it were light'.

"After my little brother's grand wedding, we'll head for the Anarchic Lands. With the assistance of Barker and his brothers, things will be much simpler." Linley's eyes glowed with an unspoken light.

Linley was extremely excited and couldn't wait to begin his future life in the Anarchic Lands, where he would do battle against the Radiant Church.

Aside from the wonderful surprise of Boone reaching the ninth rank, everyone was also eagerly anticipating the upcoming wedding. Wharton was all smiles every day as well.

This time, Wharton and Nina would be holding their wedding ceremony in the imperial palace. The excitement and hustle bustle would far exceed the engagement ceremony.

Within a quiet courtyard.

After having finished his training, Linley sat next to a stone desk. With a flip of his hand, he retrieved a flask of fruit wine. While drinking wine, he stared forward, pondering. From the look of him, he was clearly thinking about something.

Bebe stealthily peeked at Linley.

"Swish." Bebe suddenly scurried onto Linley's table.

Linley was startled by Bebe. "Bebe, what are you doing?"

Bebe stood up straight, folding his claws over his chest, staring at Linley with an appraising gaze. "Based on the observations of myself, Bebe, I've discovered that you, Boss...are thinking lustful thoughts about love!"

Bebe spoke with the aura of absolute conviction.

Linley didn't know whether to laugh or to cry. "I'm thinking about those dear bros of mine. In a few days, it will be Wharton's grand wedding. But Boss Yale, Second Bro, Fourth Bro...none of them will be able to come..."

Linley let out a long sigh.

"I wonder how the three of them are currently doing." Yale, Reynolds, and George, these three dear friends of Linley, held a very firm position in Linley's heart. Their love for each other was as deep as that of real brothers.

Reynolds wasn't doing very well. After that short break, he had returned to the army. Even after learning of Linley's duel with Haydson, he hadn't had a chance to come watch.

This was because, as a soldier, he had to follow orders and procedures.

Although Reynolds was quite sloppy and lazy, when he was in the army, he absolutely was a man who would do what he said he would and who would obey orders without question.

At the borders of the Southeast Administrative Province of the O'Brien Empire, in the area south of the city of Neil [Ne'er], was the area where the O'Brien Empire intersected with the Rohault Empire. This was also a fairly chaotic area.

The Rohault Empire was located to the south of the Anarchic Lands and west of the great plains of the far east.

Due to constant warfare with the steppe riders of the great plains, the Rohault Empire had a very ferocious, martial spirit, and their armies of mounted knights were legendary for their prowess. The Rohault Empire and the O'Brien Empire constantly engaged in warfare in the area near Neil City, and the blood from those countless battles had stained the very dirt itself a dark red color in the wilderness outside the city.

"Whoosh!" "Whoosh!" The strong wind howled through the wild grass, which was half the height of a man. The wild grass bent from the wind. Through it, one could see that there was a small creek nearby, where dozens of stallions were drinking water with their heads lowered.

Several dozen knights were seated on the ground, resting, while several others were maintaining a watch.

Right now, Reynolds was sitting atop a tree, his hawk-like eyes constantly scanning their surroundings. When he was in the army, Reynolds was very different from how he acted in private. Right now, he wore a deep blue armor which had a golden insignia of a flame emblazoned onto his chest. This represented that he was a member of the 'Golden Flame Legion', one of the elite legions of the O'Brien Empire.

And the design of his armor gave testament to his rank; senior captain.

Reynolds withdrew a watch from his breast-pocket and checked the time. "Three in the afternoon. At five, the others should have arrived."

"Milord." A blue-haired knight walked over with a laugh. "The Rohault Empire is currently not in a state of warfare with the O'Brien Empire. Don't you feel that we are wasting energy by maintaining such a long watch?"

"Tiger, stop talking." Reynolds frowned.

"Yes sir." The blue-haired knight no longer dared to laugh.

Commanding this squadron of knights was actually a downgraded position for him as a senior captain. In total, there were three medium-sized squadrons with nine hundred people total. Right now, they had been separated into eighteen smaller squads and taken separate routes. The squad which Reynolds was leading was actually his personal squad, and a very powerful one.

He had already been in the army for quite a few years, and Reynolds had slowly risen through the ranks from common soldier to his current position.

"Although the Rohault Empire has not been in open warfare for over ten years with our O'Brien Empire, aren't there always small skirmishes? Each year, the Empire suffers over ten thousand casualties from these border skirmishes." Reynolds said solemnly. "And based on my calculations, it has been a very long time since a large battle. I imagine the population of the Rohault Empire has already reached its limits, and they will therefore force some battles. Thus, we must be careful."

The meaning of warfare was very simple.

When the population rose too much and there wasn't enough land or food to support the people, the Empires would naturally begin to war against each other. If they didn't, the Empires would fall into internal chaos. After two Empires both suffered a high amount of casualties, the reduced population would mean that the amount of land they had was sufficient to sustain their people. Naturally, they would cease fighting.

In truth, this was one of the most basic principles.

After all, to most commoners, the most important, basic necessity was that of sufficient food and a place to live.

"Yes, milord. We will be careful." The blue-haired knight laughed.

"Right. Milord, you previously were at the Ernst Institute with Master Linley. I heard that he fought Lord Haydson to a standstill?" The blue-haired knight said quietly.

Hearing his subordinate ask him about Linley, Reynolds couldn't help but begin to grin.

"The only reason he suffered a slight loss was because he didn't have enough battle-qi." Reynolds said calmly. In his heart, Reynolds actually felt quite regretful that he hadn't been able to go watch this life-and-death battle of his beloved bro.

Turning his head to stare westwards, Reynolds squinted his eyes due to the scorching rays of the sun. His dear brother Linley was in the imperial capital to the west.

"In a bit more than a year, my ten year commitment will be up and I'll be able to leave the army." Reynolds secretly sighed to himself.

The eight-plus years of army life had caused Reynolds to truly enjoy being in the army, but Reynolds knew that per the regulations of his clan, if the descendants of the clan were able to reach the rank of legion commander or deputy legion commander, they would be permitted to remain in the army. If they did not, then they would have to return home to the clan.

Right now, Reynolds was only a senior captain. He was still one step away.

But although Reynolds did rather enjoy the army life, he didn't want to spend his entire life in the army. He still wanted to quietly train his magic in peace. He was already a magus of the seventh rank. If he spent another hundred years in painstaking training, he still had a shot at becoming an Arch Magus of the ninth rank.

While he quietly waited, the other squads began to arrive. By around 4:50 PM, around 400 people had gathered here, with 500 yet to arrive.

"Hrm?" Reynolds suddenly frowned.

He suddenly had the sensation of impending danger, as though an invisible, murderous force was stealthily creeping towards them. As a magus, Reynolds had an extremely powerful spiritual force, and his premonitions were far stronger than most people's.

"Everyone, be careful!" Reynolds suddenly shouted coldly.

"Yes, milord!" All the surrounding knights answered, but right at this moment, the sound of frantic hoof beats could be heard, drawing closer to them at high speed.

"Enemy ambush!" Enemy ambush!" That fierce shout shattered the calm skies.

Virtually all of the knights reacted very quickly, snatching up their spears and raising their shields as they all charged at high speed towards their horses. But just at this moment, sharp arrows began to rain down upon them from afar....

"Swish!" "Swish!"

The arrows rained down upon them at high speed like a plague of locusts. All of the knights immediately knelt down while raising their shields to protect themselves, while moving closer to each other.

The Empire's shields were of very high quality. In battle, it was rare that ordinary arrows would be able to pierce through them. And indeed, many of the arrows struck the shields, but the shields would only tremble slightly as the arrows fell to the ground, spent. But ten or so arrows passed straight through the shields, as though they were made of paper...

"Pierce!"

A fast-moving arrow tore straight through a shield, then pierced straight through the knight's head. Brain matter exploded out.

Reynolds, seeing this, felt heartsick. These knights were his personal squad, and had followed him for six years. Six years of living together had resulted in deep bonds of affection. But Reynolds instantly could tell: "To be able to pierce through shields from hundreds of meters away means they are definitely experts of the seventh or eighth ranks. And there are quite a few of them."

"Rumble." As those distant people moved nearer, the sound of their horses' hoof steps grew clearer. This group of people all wore gray armor, and the hooves of their horses were covered with cloth.

In front of these people, over ten bloodstained knights were fleeing.

"Rossi [Luo'xi]." Reynolds' face changed. Those ten knights belonged to his squad.

"Milord, flee, quick! These are the soldiers of the Rohault Empire, and they number in the thousands! Quick...ah!!!" A bloodied knight ran past at high speed, but in the blink of an eye, an arrow went straight through his throat.

“Kill them all! Let none survive!” A cold voice rang out from afar.

“Flee!”

Reynolds shouted loudly. Fight against an opponent numbering in the thousands, while he only had a few hundred people? And what’s more, they were being ambushed, and the enemy had multiple elite warriors of the seventh and eighth ranks.

In addition, their duty was reconnaissance. They had to go back and spread the news.

The lucky survivors immediately vaulted onto their warhorses. Perhaps because their enemies wanted to acquire those several hundred horses, the arrows that had rained down on them just now had only struck the knights. Not a single warhorse had been killed.

Flee!

Flee!

The only thing on Reynolds’ mind was to flee at high speed. At the beginning, four hundred men had tried to flee, but right now, only a hundred were left. That a hundred were left was because Reynolds had used magic to intimidate their enemies. While fleeing, Reynolds was still muttering the words to even more magical spells.

With Reynolds at the center, eight swathes of flame shaped like greatswords suddenly exploded forth, scattering in every direction and charging directly towards the pursuing armies.

Fire-style magic – Decapitating Inferno!

“Crackle, crackle.” The blazing flames slashed down on the bodies of those knights, who immediately began to scream in agony. Their metal armor rapidly melted, and in the blink of an eye, they were turned to char. The surrounding grass began to blaze as well, and the following knights were forced to slow down.

“Chase, chase!” That blonde, tousled-haired leader stared angrily at the distant Reynolds.

If it hadn’t been for that distant magus, he would’ve wiped out this group of people long ago. But because of that magus and because it was autumn and the grass was dry, the grass had easily begun to burn and caused a huge wildfire, blocking their pursuit.

Magical force wasn't endless.

Reynolds didn't dare to use any actual spells of the seventh rank. All of the spells he had used were of the sixth rank. But despite that, nearly all of the mageforce in Reynolds' body had been exhausted.

Only a single squad of three hundred soldiers of the Rohault Empire continued their pursuit, but this squad had over ten experts of the seventh rank. Clearly, this was an elite squad. And in Reynolds' squad, there was only a single warrior of the seventh rank, and of course himself, a magus of the seventh rank.

"The city of Neil! I can see the city of Neil!" One of the knights shouted loudly.

"Neil city!" Reynolds saw the distant, hazy outlines of the city. His eyes were filled with hope, and he frantically urged his horse forwards.

"Swish!" Yet another arrow shot at them from behind, and the exhausted Reynolds once again frantically dodged while raising his shield to block. With a 'slash' sound, the arrow pierced through the shield and into Reynolds' shoulder. The powerful force of that arrow actually caused the exhausted body of Reynolds' to sway, and he nearly fell from his horse.

After running for two hours, it was almost dusk.

The walls of the city of Neil were manned by quite a few warriors, as well as a number of nobles who were on the walls strolling about aimlessly.

"Open the city gates, quick! There are soldiers of the Rohault Empire behind us. Kill them all!!!" Reynolds roared furiously.

In the blink of an eye, Reynolds and his tens of wounded surviving soldiers reached the outskirts of the city of Neil, but the gates to the city didn't open.

"Swish!" An arrow shot out at one of the nobles on the wall.

"Don't open it! Don't open the city gates!" A shrill, ear-piercing voice could be heard coming from up above. "Fire your arrows! Shoot the enemies to death!"

That pursuing squad of the Rohault Empire stopped just outside of bow range. Ten of them actually dismounted, then charged directly towards the city walls. They easily dodged the arrows aimed at them from above, and all of them were covered with a sheath of battle-qi.

These were mighty warriors indeed.

“Kill that magus.” The leader of those ten men stared fixedly at Reynolds. They had chased all the way over here for the sake of killing Reynolds. A magus without mageforce was simply far too weak.

Right now, Reynolds couldn’t fight back at all.

“Open the gates!” Reynolds’ squad of knights felt totally hopeless now. Although they had several dozen people and their enemy only had ten, just from looking at their opponents’ battle-qi, they could tell that the leader of their enemies could probably kill them all by himself.

Chapter 37

“Open the gates!”

“Open the gates!”

Reynolds and his men continuously howled with anger. The enemy only had three hundred in total, while Neil City had tens of thousands of soldiers. What was there to be afraid of? After making their way back here, Reynolds and his men had thought that their lives had been saved, but now...

“Slash!” A warblade chopped down towards a knight’s neck, bifurcating him into two pieces. His intestines rolled out.

“Die, all of you, die!” The leader of the enemies laughed wildly.

Reynolds’ side was quickly decimated. In the blink of an eye, only a few were left. Staring at the enemies, Reynolds couldn’t help but feel despair.

“Am I going to die?”

Reynolds had many goals and dreams which he had yet to accomplish. But now, he was about to die.

On the city walls, a group of nobles were surrounding an ashen-faced middle-aged noble.

“Your Imperial Highness, are you alright?”

“Don’t be afraid, your Imperial Highness. The enemies won’t be able to break in.”

After continuous reassurances, the middle-aged noble slowly calmed down. This man was the administrator of the Southeast Administrative Province, the younger brother of the Emperor, Prince Julin.

Prince Julin wasn't born with any spine or ability, but he was the younger brother of Emperor Johann, and Emperor Johann doted on this younger brother. Thus, Prince Julin was living quite a comfortable life.

He knew that it had been over a decade since the O'Brien Empire and the Rohault Empire had engaged in any large scale battles. Thus, he had been happy to come here to 'take a look at the borders'. His arrival had caused all the local nobles of Neil City to surround and pamper him.

But who would've thought that just as he was bragging about the military might of the Empire up on the wall, an arrow had shot towards him. Fortunately, the guards next to him had blocked the windows.

"Open the gates!" A desolate, angry howl from below.

The surrounding warriors' eyes were turning red at the scene. There weren't many enemies. If the army of Neil City were to charge out, they could definitely kill all the enemies with ease. But Prince Julin refused to let them open the gates.

"Your Imperial Highness, there aren't many enemies below. Let me lead my men to go kill them." A military officer begged.

"Bullshit." Prince Julin pointed at his nose and cursed, "What the hell do you know? Can't you see that far away, there are several hundred soldiers?"

"But your Imperial Highness, our city of Neil has thirty thousand soldiers." The military officer argued.

Prince Julin sneered, "It is dusk right now, and in the distance, there is a great deal of tall grass. Who knows how many enemies are lying in wait? Think about it, for just a few hundred people to dare attack, surely they must have some sort of support, yes? It isn't worth the risk and the additional bloodshed just to rescue a few dozen soldiers of the Empire."

Prince Julin spoke with authority and determination.

"But your Imperial Highness..." The military officer didn't know whether to laugh or to cry. Clearly, this Prince Julin didn't know anything about military affairs. Given how sturdy the city of Neil was, even if their enemy had a hundred thousand

soldiers, they wouldn't find it easy to break through the defense of Neil City and its thirty thousand soldiers.

What's more, his side was just going to go kill the enemies below the city walls. It wasn't as though they were going to chase and counterattack.

Prince Julin wiped away the cold sweat from his forehead.

"Isn't it just a few dozen common soldiers? If they die, they die. I don't want to be in any risk." Prince Julin secretly said to himself. He immediately said with severity, "Remember, you are not to attack without authorization. Otherwise, if something happens, don't blame me for being merciless."

"Your Imperial Highness, the leader of those people seems to be Reynolds." Someone suddenly said.

"Which Reynolds?" Prince Julin frowned.

"The Reynolds who is in the principal line of descent for the Dunstan clan."

"The Dunstan clan?" Prince Julin frowned, but then he laughed uncaringly. "To die for the sake of the Empire is a glorious thing for their clan. In addition, the Dunstan clan is a large one. So what if a single descendant dies?"

Prince Julin didn't care in the slightest.

"Open the city gates!" That desolate cry rang out again. And then, there were no more cries to be heard from outside the city.

Reynolds body slumped down, falling against the city walls. An arrow was in his shoulder, and a terrifying wound could be seen in his chest. Fresh blood flowed everywhere.

Reynolds had already lost consciousness.

"Senior captain?" Reynolds' armor revealed his status.

The leader immediately grabbed Reynolds, tossing him onto his shoulder, then shouted to his men, "Let's go." As he spoke, those ten men left as fast as lightning.

From start to finish, aside from shooting arrows atop the city walls, the defenders of the city of Neil didn't open the city gates or engage the enemies in battle at all.

The Dunstan clan possessed tremendous influence in the military. Soon, the news of how Reynolds' entire unit had been wiped out, while Prince Julin had given the

ridiculous order that his men were not to leave the city and engage in battle, reached its way to the Dunstan clan.

Not long after Prince Julin returned to his residence, his subordinates told him something shocking.

"Your Imperial Highness, that Lord Reynolds who died in battle was an extremely close friend of Master Linley. The two studied together at the Ernst Institute, and their affection for each other rivals that of real brothers." A bearded middle-aged man said respectfully to Prince Julin.

"What? Master Linley? The two are as close as real brothers?" Prince Julin instantly jumped to his feet.

"Those...those bastards! Why didn't they tell me up on the wall?" Prince Julin said frantically.

"Your Imperial Highness, there aren't many people who know of the relationship between Linley and Reynolds. Even in the imperial capital, only a few nobles know. How could those distant nobles of Neil City know about this?"

Prince Julin immediately began to frown.

He wasn't afraid of offending the Dunstan clan. No matter how powerful the Dunstan clan was, they relied on being in the good graces of the Emperor. It was just one clan member, after all. All he had to do was to say something to the Dunstan clan, and this matter would definitely be at an end.

But offending Linley was something else entirely.

"Immediately reach out to the Dunstan clan. Also...prevent any news from coming out of the city of Neil. Don't let the information get to the imperial capital, especially to Linley. Just say that Reynolds' death was in battle and in service to the Empire." Prince Julin was truly beginning to panic.

Yulan calendar, year 10009. September 15th. This was the day when Wharton and Nina were going to get married. Wharton was the younger brother of the world-famous Master Linley, while Nina was an Imperial Princess.

Their grand wedding was naturally an incomparably important affair.

Within the palace, beautiful music wafted throughout the halls like flowing water. All the nobles were toasting each other while chatting and laughing.

"Emperor Johann, excuse me." Linley said with a calm laugh as he nursed his cup of wine.

Linley truly was not accustomed to dealing with these nobles. After saying a few words to a few people, Linley left the main hall and headed towards a garden, with Delia soon following him there.

"What is it, Linley?" Delia laughed.

"Not comfortable." Linley chuckled.

"It seems that today you aren't in a very good mood." Delia saw that an unhappy look was on Linley's face. Linley nodded. "I don't know why, but for some reason, I feel anxious and irritable."

When one's spirit had reached Linley's level, it was quite rare that one would feel irritable and uncomfortable.

"Today is Wharton's grand wedding. Be happy." Delia consoled.

Linley let out a long breath and nodded.

While Linley and Delia were in the garden, Emperor Johann received a secret letter. His personal attendant said in a soft voice, "Your Imperial Majesty, Reynolds of the Dunstan clan died in battle."

"Reynolds died? Which Reynolds?" Emperor Johann glanced at his personal attendant. Why did a single person's death have to be brought to the attention to the Emperor? Did he, the Emperor, have nothing better to do than to worry about this?

"This was a classmate of Master Linley's at the Ernst Institute. He is on extremely good terms with Master Linley." His personal attendant said in a quiet voice. "Your Imperial Majesty, this matter involves his Imperial Highness, Prince Julin."

"Julin?"

"According to our reports, Reynolds and his men were pursued by the soldiers of the Rohault Empire to the walls of the city, but Prince Julin ordered his men not to open the gates and to strictly defend only."

"Defend? How many soldiers did the enemy have?" Emperor Johann frowned.

"Three hundred." The palace attendant said.

Emperor Johann's eyes bulged out. "Three hundred, and he had them defend only? This Julin...jeeze..." Emperor Johann felt a surge of anger, but then, in the blink of an eye, he understood what had just happened.

He understood his younger brother very well.

Julin was a person without much ambition. His main problem was that he was a bit of a coward. Emperor Johann didn't consider this much of a flaw. After all, he didn't need to rely on Julin to lead his armies or to do anything else.

But now, the situation had just gotten complicated. If Linley were to find out...and if Linley were to cause trouble...

Thinking back to the terrifying power Linley had displayed at Mt. Tujiao, and how powerful those two magical beasts were, Emperor Johann immediately understood that unless the experts from the War God's College were to intervene, there was no way he could suppress Linley's forces at all.

But how could the War God's College intervene for the sake of a mere prince?

This was impossible.

"Julin. All he ever does is create disasters for me." Emperor Johann rapidly considered what to do. Although he was furious, he still had to protect his little brother.

"Your Imperial Majesty, as Prince Julin tells it, they didn't have a chance to rescue Reynolds before Reynolds and his men were killed at the base of the city walls. At that time, it was already very dark, and they weren't sure as to exactly how many men the opponents had." The palace attendant said softly.

Emperor Johann nodded slightly. He carefully considered how to manage this affair.

There was no way this could be totally hidden!

This was Emperor Johann's first reaction. It was best not to try and hide something from a peak-stage Saint like Linley. Otherwise, once the lie was discovered, things would go catastrophically wrong.

Emperor Johann immediately walked out of the hall and headed towards the garden in search of Linley.

"Emperor Johann?" Linley, who was strolling alongside Delia, saw Emperor Johann walk over with a dire expression on his face. He couldn't help but call out to him questioningly.

When Emperor Johann saw Linley, the look on his face became all the grimmer.

"Emperor Johann, what exactly has happened?" Linley frowned.

Emperor Johann sighed. "Linley, I'm going to tell you something, but you have to be calm."

"What happened?" Linley was growing nervous. These past few days, Linley kept feeling irritable and restless. Hearing Emperor Johann's words, he began to worry.

It seemed as though something terrible had happened.

Emperor Johann let out a low sigh. "Just now, we received word from the Golden Flame Legion based in the Southeast Administrative Province. A squad of knights led by Reynolds was ambushed by enemy forces, and was chased back the entire way..."

Linley's heart instantly sank.

"Reynolds and a few people managed to make their way towards Neil City, but the soldiers of Neil City didn't have enough time to save them. Reynolds and his men...all died in battle!"

"All died in battle!" "All died in battle!" "All died in battle!"

These four words struck Linley like thunderbolts, reverberating and echoing in Linley's mind. Linley felt as though his mind had gone blank, and all strength had left his body. Everything had gone blank!

After a long time...

"Fourth Bro...Fourth Bro...he died?" Linley stuttered.

"Hi there. I'm Reynolds, from the O'Brien Empire." Linley could still clearly recall how he had met Reynolds for the first time, as they were registering to enroll in the Ernst Institute. The first person he had met was Reynolds. At that time, Linley had been with Uncle Hillman, while Reynolds had been with his Grandpa Lomu.

Two young children had become friends, just like that.

The eight years after that, they had been together day and night. Reynolds' sloppiness, his mischievousness, his sincerity...his joyful laughter. One scene after another swam to the forefront of Linley's mind.

"Fourth Bro, he died?"

Linley couldn't believe it. Just a while ago, his Fourth Bro had been chatting and laughing with himself and Boss Yale. But just like that, he had died in battle.

Linley could clearly remember how he had looked and how he had sounded.

How could Fourth Bro have died?

"Master Linley, I hope you can restrain your grief." Emperor Johann, seeing the look on Linley's face, began to grow nervous. He was afraid that Linley would go crazy.

Linley turned to stare at Emperor Johann, his gaze stabbing at Emperor Johann like sharp daggers. In a low voice, he said, "Emperor Johann, tell me, what exactly happened? I hope you won't lie to me. If you are wise, you can probably guess what the results would be for someone lying to me! Tell me, what exactly happened?"

Chapter 38

Emperor Johann couldn't help but frown at Linley's attitude. No matter what, he was still the Emperor of the O'Brien Empire.

"Emperor Johann!" Linley's voice grew even deeper, and his eyes stabbed at Emperor Johann.

Emperor Johann suddenly had the sensation that he was sinking into a cold, dark abyss. Linley's stare was making it somewhat hard for him to breathe. Emperor Johann's throat clenched, and he managed to say, "Master Linley, what is the meaning of this? Don't you trust Us?"

By his side, Delia maintained her silence.

Linley stared at Emperor Johann. In a deep voice, he said, "Emperor Johann, it isn't that I don't trust you. Only, Reynolds is my close friend. All of a sudden, you tell me that he died in battle? Tell me...how could I not want to try and find out the truth of the matter?"

"The truth of the matter?"

Emperor Johann stood erect and said angrily, "Master Linley, can it be that We are not telling the truth? Let Us tell you once again, Reynolds was pursued and killed by the forces of the Rohault Empire to the walls of Neil City, where he died in battle. There is no question about this!"

"Neil City?" Linley's eyes couldn't help but narrow. "Emperor Johann, if Reynolds had already fled to the walls of Neil City, how could it be that those many soldiers of Neil City were unable to rescue Reynolds?"

Emperor Johann hesitated, but then said firmly, "At that time, We were not there. However, according to what We have learned, just as Reynolds arrived at the walls of Neil City, he was killed before the soldiers of the city had a chance to rescue him."

His Fourth Bro had died!

Linley didn't wish to believe it. When he had been interrogating Emperor Johann, scenes and memories of the time he had spent with his Fourth Bro came drifting uncontrollably to his mind, causing Linley's baleful feeling in his heart to grow even stronger.

Emperor Johann could sense that Linley's mood was transforming. The aura of the surrounding environment had become terrifyingly oppressive. Giant beads of sweat appeared on Emperor Johann's forehead, but he only stared at Linley.

No matter what, he couldn't open his mouth and spill the truth. He had to insist that Reynolds' had died in battle, and the soldiers of the city of Neil didn't have a chance to rescue him.

Linley closed his eyes, forcing down that demonic feeling in his heart. He let out a breath.

When his eyes opened, they flashed like lightning. Under Linley's gaze, Emperor Johann felt tremendous psychological pressure. As an ordinary warrior, how could his spiritual energy compare to that of an Arch Magus of the ninth rank like Linley?

"Emperor Johann, you must understand, perhaps what you are telling me is true. But are you able to guarantee that the person who brought you this information also told the truth?" Linley's voice was very low.

Emperor Johann nodded without any hesitation, saying firmly, "Linley, you must believe Us."

Linley glanced at Emperor Johann, then said calmly, "Emperor Johann, I'm not in a good mood today. I'm going back home. Let my little brother and Nina know."

Although his forehead was covered in sweat, Emperor Johann still squeezed out a smile. "Master Linley, We can totally understand how you are feeling. Master Linley, go home and get some rest. We shall definitely inform Wharton and Nina."

Linley nodded, then left the imperial palace alongside Delia.

Watching Linley leave, Emperor Johann finally let out a sigh of relief. Wiping the sweat from his forehead, he secretly said to himself, "Good heavens, lying in front of Linley is absolutely terrifying. If Linley were to have let loose his anger, no one here would have been able to stop him."

After calming himself down, Emperor Johann once more summoned that noble, majestic smile to his face and returned to the main hall.

Linley and Delia walked shoulder-to-shoulder on Boulder Street. On the way back from the imperial palace, Linley had been silent the entire time. Next to him, Delia could sense how much pain Linley was in.

After a long moment, Delia said softly, "Linley."

Linley was startled out of his reverie by this voice. Having escaped his memories for a moment, he looked at Delia. "What is it?" Delia said in a gentle, comforting voice, "Are you thinking about Reynolds?"

Linley nodded gently. "Delia, in my heart, Boss Yale, Second Bro, and Fourth Bro are like true brothers to me. I've never even considered the possibility that Fourth Bro would die in battle." Although he was calm when saying these words, Delia noticed that Linley's eyes had turned red.

Despite being such a resilient person, Linley's eyes were moist. One could imagine how much pain he was in.

Even if he didn't actively think about past events, the memories of his youth swam to him unbidden. He still remembered how the four of them had drank together and played together, laughing merrily. He still remembered how, in their dormitory, they chatted about the girls of the Institute. At that time, both Reynolds and Yale were very animated. Thinking back to Reynolds' sloppy, lazy demeanor, Linley couldn't help but feel even more miserable.

They had arrived at Count Wharton's manor.

"Milord." The gate guards said respectfully.

After staring at the estate, Linley then turned his head towards Delia. "Delia, you can go back for now."

"Where are you going?" Delia asked questioningly. Hurriedly, she said, "Linley, please don't do anything rash." Delia knew that given Linley's current condition, it was possible that he might cause some sort of disastrous catastrophe.

Linley shook his head. "No, I'm just going to Reynolds' home...the Dunstan clan!"

The Dunstan clan was also one of the oldest clans of the O'Brien Empire. In the army, the Dunstan clan had an extremely large amount of influence.

The Dunstan clan was located not too far from the imperial palace.

Using the Windshadow spell, Linley soared as gracefully as the wind itself through the streets of the city. Before most people even had a chance to notice Linley, he would have already moved a hundred meters past them.

"Man, I told you to be careful and to not piss off the Madame. Jeeze..." Two guards of the Dunstan clan were talking to each other. One of them was laughing at another one.

The other guard nursed his face, which had a bright red handprint on it.

"I didn't do anything to irritate her! Only, when the Madame arrived, I didn't move back far enough, so the Madame yelled at me and gave me a slap. Damn, man. So not fair."

"Don't complain about fair or unfair. Young master Reynolds just died in battle. Whoever angers the Madame right now is asking for death."

The two guards casually chatted, but suddenly, with a gust of wind, a human figure appeared in front of the gates to the Dunstan clan's manor.

The two guards were startled.

"Might I ask who you are, milord?" One of the guards said.

"Go make a report and state that Linley wishes to meet with the leader of the Dunstan clan." Linley's voice was calm, but it had a certain penetrative, soul-shaking power.

"Master Linley?" The two guards exchanged glances, amazement in their eyes.

What sort of a person was Linley? He was one of the most powerful experts in the entire Yulan continent, on the same level as the Holy Emperor or Haydson.

The two guards immediately bowed deeply.

“Master Linley, please wait a moment. I will immediately go make the report.” One of the guards immediately ran at high speed inside the manor. Linley quietly waited there outside the gate, standing as straight and as stiff as a spear.

Shortly afterwards, three middle-aged men ran over at high speed. The leader of these three was the leader of the Dunstan clan, and Reynolds’ father: Neon [Ni’en] Dunstan.

Neon Dunstan, upon learning that Linley had come, had immediately ran over to welcome him.

They knew that today was the day of Wharton’s grand wedding with Nina. But because of Reynolds’ death, the Dunstan clan was extremely depressed, which was why the Dunstan clan had not attended Wharton and Nina’s wedding banquet.

“Is this Master Linley?”

Neon Dunstan spied Linley from afar. Linley was an important figure of the world. Neon could sense at a single glance Linley’s astonishing presence.

This was a sort of spiritual pressure.

When experts trained to a certain level, their spirit and their soul would both transform. Saint-level experts, even if their clothes were tattered, would generally seem much more noble than most nobles.

Linley turned his head and saw Neon and the other two arrive.

When his electric gaze swept past the three men, all of them took a deep breath before warmly saying words of welcome. The clan leader, Neon, was the first to speak. “Master Linley, if there is anything you need, you could’ve sent someone for us. I would’ve come to speak with you. There was no need to trouble you to come in person, Master Linley.”

Linley didn’t mince words, immediately heading into the Dunstan clan’s estate. He passed by those three people and headed directly inside.

Neon Dunstan and the others were puzzled, but they immediately followed him.

Given Linley's current understanding of the wind, he only needed a thought to activate the Windscout spell, allowing him to 'see' everything within several kilometers. As Linley walked into the main hall of the Dunstan clan, he saw that many people were already clustered there. All of them were men.

"Respectful greetings to Master Linley." All of the men bowed respectfully to him.

Linley forced out a smile, then said, "Everyone, no need to be so courteous. I imagine everyone here knows why I have come today."

Neon Dunstan and the others exchanged glances. All of them were stunned for quite a while.

"Reynolds is dead." Linley's gaze swept the men surrounding him, his voice growing deep. "Reynolds was one of my best friends. We were as close as real brothers!"

Linley's voice filled the entire hall with a stifling aura.

"Right now, what I want to know is, how exactly did Fourth Bro die? Was it truly due to the so-called 'reason' of the soldiers of Neil City not being able to rescue him in time, resulting in him dying in battle!" Linley's gaze came to a halt on Neon Dunstan.

Neon Dunstan sighed deeply. "Linley, Reynolds was my son. I am in great pain over his death. But there is nothing for it. In war, people will die. The Dunstan clan can't kick up a huge fuss and racket just because my son died. The Dunstan clan is a military clan. The original reason why we decided long ago to have every single son serve for ten years in the military was to make sure that they were all mentally prepared to die in service to their country. If they aren't able to be tempered like steel, how can they become of use?"

"I understand this."

Linley looked calmly at Neon Dunstan. "To sacrifice one's life for one's homeland is nothing to be ashamed of. However...for some reason, I feel that Reynolds death in front of the walls of Neil City is something hard for me to believe. Could it be that Neil City didn't have any experts present? Wouldn't it be easy for them to simply jump down the city walls and rescue them?"

"Uncle Neon!" Linley stared fixedly at Neon Dunstan. "You must understand. My brother is dead. If he had died a glorious death in battle, I will only feel proud of him! But if he died a meaningless death, or died due to some other reason, then I

must definitely find out everything there is to know about what happened to my dear brother!"

"If his death involved some other people who intentionally caused my brother to die? Then I will make them die as well!!!" Linley's eyes were like daggers.

Neon and the others all felt their hearts tremble.

"Uncle Neon!" The way in which Linley had addressed him had caused Neon's heart to quiver as well.

"Tell me. Your son. My brother. Did he die an unjust, meaningless death?" Linley stared at Neon Dunstan, waiting for his response.

A very complicated look was on Neon Dunstan's face, but he looked directly at Linley and replied firmly, "Master Linley, thank you so much. However, my son died gloriously in battle. His death was not an unjust one!!!"

Linley swept everyone's faces with his gaze.

"Then I bid you farewell." Linley turned and immediately left the Dunstan clan.

Watching Linley depart, Neon Dunstan and the others all let out secret sighs of relief. Neon Dunstan immediately ordered in a bright voice, "Everyone, go back to your usual affairs."

After speaking, Neon Dunstan immediately left the main hall and returned to his study.

"Reynolds...forgive your father!" As he walked, Neon's eyes turned red.

Given the influence and power the Dunstan clan held within the military, they naturally knew exactly what had happened. Neon's son had done battle with the enemy for quite some time at the walls of Neil City before being killed. But Prince Julin had personally ordered that nobody was to open the city gates and rescue them.

His death had been an unjust one!

Neon's heart was filled with bitter tears. "Master Linley might kill Prince Julin in order to avenge you. But his Imperial Majesty dotes on Prince Julin very much. Although he wouldn't dare to seek revenge against Master Linley, he would definitely do so against the Dunstan clan."

There was nothing for it!

If a man was dead, he was dead. They had to act for the sake of the living!

Chapter 39

Linley returned to Count Wharton's manor. When he did, he locked himself into his courtyard, forbidding anyone from entering. Although it was Wharton and Nina's wedding, after learning that Reynolds had died in battle, Wharton knew how his big brother must be feeling right now.

Nobody in the Count's estate dared to go disturb Linley.

The courtyard door remained firmly shut.

Linley sat at a stone table. There was a single flask of wine and two wine cups on the table. One wine cup was in front of Linley; the other was opposite of him. Only...nobody was sitting opposite of Linley.

Linley poured wine into both of the cups, then raised one of them in a toast.

"Fourth Bro..." Linley stared straight ahead, his gaze seeming to pierce through the walls of reality. His eyes, however, were red. "Have a good journey."

Raising his head, Linley gulped the entire cup of wine down.

Fourth Bro had died.

Linley simply couldn't accept this.

But first he had interrogated Emperor Johann, and then he had interrogated the people of the Dunstan clan. He had even carefully inspected the expressions on the faces of the Dunstan clan's people. Linley had come to the conclusion...

That perhaps, his Fourth Bro truly had died a glorious death in battle. Perhaps it hadn't been anyone's fault at all.

But what Linley didn't know was that only the three or four core members of the Dunstan clan knew the truth. Neon Dunstan knew that Linley would pay attention to their expressions, which is why he hadn't told anyone else the truth.

There was one other person who knew the truth. Reynolds' mother!

This was the so-called 'Madame' the guards had mentioned earlier. Reynolds' mother was heartbroken. Neon knew very well that in front of Linley, Reynolds'

mother wouldn't be able to dissemble at all, which is why no women were present at all in the main hall. Naturally, Reynolds' mother hadn't been there either.

"Fourth Bro, you were the smallest of us four bros. I didn't expect that you would have been the first to depart." Linley's heart felt as though it had been stabbed by knives, and two trails of tears began to flow down uncontrollably.

Snatching the wine flask with his hands, Linley raised his head and began to drink.

"Cough, cough." After drinking so fast, Linley began to cough. But after coughing two or three times, Linley once again raised his head high and drank it all down.

Bebe and Haeru stood in the corner of the courtyard, not daring to disturb Linley at all.

"This is the fourth time the Boss has been so heartbroken." Bebe said to himself. The first time was when he had broken up with Alice. The second time was when he had learned of his father's death. The third time was when Grandpa Doehring had passed away...

Family members. Friends. One after the other, they had left him.

Linley felt great pain, but Linley knew...he had to be strong. Because he had other family members and other friends. He had to be strong, both for the sake of the dead as well as for the sake of the living.

"Let me just wallow in my misery for three days, then."

Linley painfully cracked his lips into a laugh. Then, without holding back at all, he cried as he wished, drank as he wished, laughed as he wished, mumbled as he wished, reminisced as he wished...or even spoke to Reynolds as though he were there.

Three days later!

"Creaaaak." The door to the courtyard swung open. Delia had been waiting outside the courtyard the entire time for the past few days, and had asked a servant to bring a stone bench over. She had been sitting there, reading as she quietly awaited Linley.

Three days!

Linley had shut himself in his courtyard for three days, and Delia had waited outside for three days.

Hearing the door creak open, Delia turned her head in surprised pleasure. Right now, Linley was dressed in a long, light blue robe. His back was still ramrod straight, and he didn't look the slightest bit downtrodden.

"Linley..." Delighted, Delia immediately went over to welcome him.

Linley looked at Delia, and as he did, he felt a warm, thankful feeling in his heart. Given Linley's current level, how could he have been unaware that Delia had been waiting outside for three full days?

Although he was inside the courtyard and was separated from Delia by a gate, Linley could sense Delia's presence at all times.

Linley suddenly reached out and took Delia into his arms.

Delia was stunned.

Linley had never hugged her on his own accord before!

Holding Delia in his arms, Linley lowered his head. The tip of his nose brushed against Delia's fragrant hair. The smell was so intoxicating. Smelling her scent, Linley felt his heart grow calmer.

It was as though a lonely little boat had finally reached a harbor.

"Delia. Thank you." Linley's voice sounded out next to Delia's ear.

Hugging Linley and resting her head against Linley's chest, Delia felt happier than she ever had been. She had spent years in the Institute hoping for this, then ten more years waiting...now, it seemed as though her dreams were closer than ever before.

After the day Linley exited the courtyard, him and Delia had drawn a step closer. Sometimes, they could tell what the other was thinking from a mere glance. Only, Linley didn't push past the final barriers between them, and Delia didn't try to do so on her own accord either.

"How is his Lordship doing?"

Gates spoke softly to Wharton in the training courtyard of the manor.

A hint of a smile was on Wharton's face. "After exiting his courtyard, my big brother's been quite close with Ms. Delia. When I saw him just now, he was even smiling. Most likely, he's feeling much better now."

Gates nodded slightly. "When his Lordship didn't leave for three days, it really was quite worrisome."

"Fifth brother, do you think his Lordship is like you, so easily abandoning himself to despair?" Another terrifyingly large and powerful man nearby said with a laugh.

"Second brother, why are you criticizing me?" Gates said unhappily.

The Count's estate was very peaceful. Linley continued to live a life of quiet training, while at the same time, making his preparations to head out to the Anarchic Lands.

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"Your Imperial Majesty, Master Linley seems to be acting as he always has. He's focused on his training. There are no abnormal activities. But of course, on the day of Lord Wharton's wedding, Master Linley paid a visit to the Dunstan clan." The palace attendant reported respectfully.

Emperor Johann's face was covered with smiles.

"Wonderful. You can leave now." Emperor Johann said calmly.

Knowing that Linley hadn't acted out of the ordinary, Emperor Johann felt much relieved. "Fortunately. Fortunately, Linley really believed that what I said was the truth."

"The Dunstan clan knew how to act as well." Emperor Johann was very satisfied.

He knew that given the influence the Dunstan clan had in the military, they definitely knew the truth of the matter. Most likely, they had found out about it even before Emperor Johann himself had.

But clearly, Linley hadn't learned anything from his trip to the Dunstan clan, and truly believed that Reynolds had died in battle, with the soldiers of Neil City unable to rescue him.

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Delia stared at a letter in her hands, then stared at Linley. She had a miserable look on her face.

"Delia, what is it?" Linley looked questioningly at Delia.

Delia shook her head helplessly. "This is a letter from my parents. They say that my grandmother is seriously ill, and want me to go home immediately. My grandmother..." A worried, sad look was on Delia's face.

Linley reached out to hold Delia's hand. Staring at Delia, he consoled her, "Don't worry. Your grandmother will be fine."

"Linley, I have to rush home." Delia looked helplessly at Linley. "I had planned to go with you to the Anarchic Lands, but now..."

Linley smiled and consoled her, "It is fine. You go home first. Given my squad's abilities, we should be able to quickly set up a base in the Anarchic Lands. In the future, when you come looking for me, it will be easy to find me."

Delia looked at Linley, unwilling to part from him.

But her grandmother was seriously ill. Her parents' letter had made her extremely worried. There was nothing she could do...she could only choose to leave and return to the Yulan Empire.

The next morning, Delia mounted on the back of the Wildthunder Stormhawk and flew directly back to the Yulan Empire.

.....

Within a prefectural city in the Central Administrative Province of the O'Brien Empire. Within a courtyard owned by a high, luxurious hotel. Yale was casually flipping through a number of letters he had received.

"Hrm? Something about Fourth Bro? What happened to Fourth Bro? Can it be that he rendered military merit and is about to be promoted?" A hint of a smile was on Yale's face.

In the past, of the four bros, Yale and Reynolds were both the playboy types. They had chased after girls together. The two of them had acted degenerately together, while George and Linley had been rather self-controlled.

Opening the letter, Yale began to read.

And as he did...

Yale's face immediately turned white. His body suddenly began to shake uncontrollably. Yale held his head in his hands and closed his eyes. After a long time...Yale finally opened his eyes.

His face was totally ashen. Not a hint of blood could be seen.

“Impossible.”

Moisture could be seen in Yale’s eyes. Soon, they turned red. Forcibly swallowing the grief in his heart, Yale continued to read.

After finishing...

“Fourth Bro!!!!” Yale’s tears began to flow.

If one was to ask Yale who were the people that he cared the most about? It definitely wouldn’t be his older biological brother. The relationship between them was relatively cold. After all, within the Dawson Conglomerate...there were many struggles and much infighting.

In the ten years after leaving the Ernst Institute, although Yale had come to trust some people, he hadn’t truly treated any of them as lifelong friends. In his heart, there were only three lifelong friends. The three he had made in his youth.

George. Linley. Reynolds!

Yale stood there, his entire body shaking uncontrollably. Suddenly, a flash of electricity appeared in his hands, turning the letter into ash.

Yale was a lightning-style magus. He was the weakest of the four bros, having only reached the level of magus of the sixth rank.

“Prince...Julin?” Yale ground his teeth, his entire body still shaking.

“You actually just stood there and watched, and let my brother die!!! I don’t care who you are. I will make sure you die!” Yale took a deep breath, closing his eyes.

He forced himself to calm down.

The Dawson Conglomerate was very influential amongst the common-folk, and border cities such as Neil City were cities which the Dawson Conglomerate viewed as being of great importance. The merchants and nobles there had many dealings with the Dawson Conglomerate.

Perhaps this secret could be kept from Linley, but there was no way they could keep this secret from the pervasive, world-spanning Dawson Conglomerate!

"There is no way that father would mobilize the forces of the Conglomerate to deal with a prince for my sake. In addition, even if he tried to, he wouldn't necessarily be successful." Yale understood this.

Prince Julin was the administrator for the Southeast Administrative Province. He controlled a huge number of soldiers. How could the Dawson Conglomerate fight against him?

"Third Bro!" Suddenly, Linley came to Yale's mind, unbidden.

"Third Bro hasn't avenged Fourth Bro yet?" Yale knew very well how much each of the four of them cared about the others. He was certain that if Linley knew why Reynolds had died, he would definitely go seek revenge. "It must be that Prince Julin and that Emperor-whatever hid this from him. Third Bro doesn't have an intelligence network."

Whenever Yale thought of that adorable youngster who had followed him around and drank and dallied alongside him at the Jade Water Paradise, he felt bitter pain in his heart.

"Fourth Bro, I promise you, Third Bro and I will definitely avenge you." Yale murmured to himself.

Suddenly, Yale roared loudly. "Attend me! Make preparations for me immediately. I am going to the imperial capital right now. Quick! I am going immediately!"

In just five short minutes, Yale was mounted atop a fine stallion, with two guards by his side. He rushed towards the imperial capital at full gallop. On the way, Yale stopped for nothing, travelling day and night, neither eating nor drinking.

On the way to the imperial capital, he switched horses at several cities, continuing to make haste towards the imperial capital at full gallop.

After two days and one night, Yale and his men managed to arrive at the imperial capital. Due to his high speed journey, both of Yale's eyes were bloodshot, and his face was so ashen and pale that it looked like the face of someone who was seriously ill.

"We're here."

From far away, Yale saw Count Wharton's manor. After two days and a night of travelling, Yale finally felt a glimmer of hope.

“Lord Yale?” The guards at the manor naturally recognized Yale. In the past, Yale had often come to visit Linley. There was no need for them to make any report before letting Yale enter. Only, the two guards were puzzled as to why Yale looked so haggard.

“Third Bro!”

Yale charged into the manor, then began shouting at the top of his lungs, “Third Bro, come out! Third Bro, quick, come out!!!!” As soon as Linley heard Yale’s first shout, he immediately ran at high speed out of his courtyard.

Seeing the distant Yale, Linley was stunned.

Right now, Yale’s face was extremely pale, and his hair was an absolute mess. Was this the impeccably dressed, handsome, and cheerful Boss Yale?

Seeing Linley, Yale immediately ran over, grabbing Linley by the shoulders. His bloodshot eyes stared at Linley, and he said in a sobbing voice, “Third Bro, you absolutely must get revenge for Fourth Bro!”

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These words stunned Linley.

Get revenge? For what?

“Wait a second!” Linley immediately understood. Fourth Bro had indeed died an unjust death.

Linley grabbed Yale by the arms. “Boss Yale, calm down. Come. Come to my place. Tell me everything you know in detail.” Yale nodded slightly.

They arrived in Linley’s courtyard.

“What were the circumstances around Fourth Bro’s death?” Linley’s face was extremely serious.

Yale said with solemnity, “Third Bro, that day, Fourth Bro had led his men in a scouting mission outside the city. Who would’ve thought that they would encounter the soldiers of the Rohault Empire? Fourth Bro was vastly outnumbered. Despite going all out, only himself and a few dozen of his men escaped. Fourth Bro and his

dozens of men fled to Neil City, and at that time, only three hundred enemies were pursuing them."

"Three hundred?" Linley simply couldn't believe it.

"Right. But simply because the Rohault Empire's soldiers fired an arrow at the wall near where Prince Julin was currently standing, Prince Julin was terrified. He immediately ordered that nobody was to be allowed to open the city gates. He ordered his men to only stand guard inside the city. This was done solely to protect himself. As for Fourth Bro and his men, they kept on screaming angrily, 'Open the gates!', but nobody dared to do so...and just like that, Fourth Bro and his men were all slaughtered."

Linley's heart was beginning to blaze with fury.

He could see the scene as if he himself was there. His Fourth Bro had miserably screamed for them to 'Open the gates!', but Prince Julin had forcibly ordered people not to open the gates. Nobody dared to go rescue them either.

And so, Fourth Bro had died.

His death was an unjust one, a pointless one. He didn't have to die!

"Where is Fourth Bro's body?" Linley immediately asked.

Yale said in agony, "According to our Conglomerate's intelligence network, Fourth Bro was hit by an arrow on the shoulder, and then the enemy used a warblade to slash open his chest. Fourth Bro collapsed at the corner of the walls. And then, the leader of the enemy soldiers took Fourth Bro's corpse away as a spoil of war."

"What?!" Linley couldn't believe it. "Three hundred people before the gates of Neil City. Not only did the guarding forces not attack, they even allowed the enemies to take away Fourth Bro's corpse?"

This was an absolute joke.

"Precisely speaking, the large majority of those three hundred soldiers stayed outside of bow range. The real attackers only numbered ten or so. Those ten experts didn't care about arrows at all." Yale's heart was filled with bitter pain. "Those ten or so experts killed Fourth Bro, then took his corpse away...but given Prince Julin's orders, none of the guard soldiers dared to venture out to do battle."

The soldiers of the O'Brien Empire were extremely disciplined and would follow orders.

But such laughable orders, in all honesty, were extremely hard to accept for them.

“Fourth Bro...” In Linley’s mind, he could see the scene of how his Fourth Bro had angrily, desperately, screamed ‘Open the gates!’ outside the walls of Neil City, but the soldiers atop the walls had coldly refused to do so.

Such an unjust death filled Linley’s heart with endless rage.

Fourth Bro shouldn’t have died at all!

“Johann and the Dunstan clan both dared to deceive me.” Linley, knowing the truth, immediately understood that most likely, the Dunstan clan had done so due to their fear of offending Prince Julin and Emperor Johann.

“So it turns out that this was all due to that Prince Julin!” Linley’s rage was building.

He had heard of Prince Julin long ago. Emperor Johann was famous for his bias and partiality, and had made his incompetent younger brother the administrator of an Administrative Province. From this alone, one could tell how much Emperor Johann doted on his younger brother.

“Third Bro, only you are capable of avenging Fourth Bro.” Yale said with pained fury.

Yale’s heart was filled with self-reproach. He, too, wanted to avenge his Fourth Bro, but he personally was simply too weak, and the Dawson Conglomerate didn’t belong to him.

Linley nodded, a cold light shining forth from his eyes. “Since that Prince Julin caused Fourth Bro’s death, then he definitely must die.” Linley turned to stare at Yale. “Yale, take a rest. I need to make a trip.”

“What are you going to do? Are you going to act against him now?”

“No.”

Linley slowly, calmly shook his head. “If I were to directly kill Prince Julin, most likely that Emperor Johann would revenge himself upon the Dunstan clan...Fourth Bro is already dead. I don’t wish for his clan to collapse as well.”

.....

War God Mountain.

Linley stood in front of the tunnel which led to the War God's training area, quietly waiting. Right at this moment, someone flew towards him at high speed. It was Castro.

"Linley, what are you doing here?" Castro questioned.

"I wish to see the War God." Linley replied.

Castro nodded. "If that's the case, then let me report your arrival." But right at this moment, a voice rang out next to Castro and Linley's ears at the same time. "Linley. Come in."

Linley had already prepared the Windshadow spell, and so he flew into the tunnel. Those familiar, winding pathways led him deeper into the tunnels until he arrived at the pit. He dropped down several thousand meters, arriving at the bottom.

A few moments later, Linley arrived at that pitch-black stone door.

"Rumble." That terrifying heat was still there, turning the stone walls scarlet red.

Linley said respectfully, "Lord War God, I imagine that you already know about my duel with Haydson. I imagine that I should now be qualified to learn of the secrets you previously spoke about."

"Enter, then." The War God's calm voice rang out.

"Rumble..." The pitch-black stone door swung open on its own, revealing a tunnel within. A terrifying blast of heat blasted out from within.

Linley formed his Dragonblood battle-qi into his Pulseguard Defense.

"What a hot place." Staring deep into the tunnel, Linley was astonished. On the far end of the tunnel, Linley saw an enormous magma pool that was at least a hundred meters wide. The lava boiled and hissed and swirled about, but this wasn't the astonishing part.

The astonishing part was...in the air directly above the magma pool, there was a ball of fire at least three meters long.

This ball of fire was pure, scarlet red. It was constantly emanating waves of terrifying heat from mid-air. For Linley to be forced to use the Pulseguard Defense to protect himself, one could imagine how terrifyingly hot this ball of fire was.

The temperature of ordinary lava wouldn't be able to hurt Linley, even if he went near it.

Even if he were to walk on top of lava, all he had to do was to control his battle-qi to protect himself. There was no need to use the Pulseguard Defense. Linley suddenly realized something...

"Where is Lord War God?" Linley looked suspiciously in every direction.

In the blink of an eye, he could make out the surrounding area. Aside from the central pool of lava, everything could be seen clearly in this area. But there wasn't a human figure in sight.

"Linley!" The War God's calm voice suddenly drifted down from within the ball of fire.

Linley stared in astonishment at that hovering ball of fire.

Could it be that the War God was that ball of fire?

A blurry human figure slowly drifted out from within that ball of fire. In the blink of an eye, that blurry human figure appeared next to the pool of magma.

This man was indeed the War God.

Linley carefully inspected this War God, whose legend was known throughout the Yulan continent. The War God wasn't an extremely tall man, only around 1.8 meters tall or so. He had the appearance of a man in his thirties. He had thick eyebrows and scarlet red hair which had grown to his waist. Due to his careful observations, Linley suddenly realized that atop the War God's scarlet red hair were multiple blazing flames.

The War God's face was as hard and cold as granite, and his eyes were extremely sharp.

With every single action, he radiated absolute certainty. In particular, he possessed a terrifying presence which caused Linley's heart to quiver.

Such power!

"Respectful greetings to you, War God." Linley said courteously.

The War God carefully looked at Linley, a hint of a smile appearing at the corners of his lips. He nodded calmly. "Not bad. I watched your duel with Haydson. Your attack technique is quite interesting."

A hint of a smile appeared on Linley's face as well.

“Lord War God, I should now be qualified to learn about the secrets of the Yulan continent, right?” Linley had already decided long ago that before heading out to the Anarchic Lands, he would come visit the War God once.

And now, he had to seek vengeance for his Fourth Bro as well.

Linley had already made careful calculations. After avenging his Fourth Bro, he would immediately head out for the Anarchic Lands. In addition, this meeting with the War God wasn't solely for the sake of learning the secrets. It was also to use the War God's influence to suppress Johann.

Who did Johann fear the most? Without question, it was the War God!

“Linley, the attack you have developed is quite unique indeed. Your current level of power is indeed on par with Haydson, and is enough to qualify you to be made aware of the secrets of the Yulan continent.” The War God said calmly.

Linley listened carefully.

“Linley, do you know how I became a Deity?” The War God suddenly looked at Linley.

“Wasn't it through gaining sufficient insight which allowed you to break through the limits of the Saint-level and reach the Deity-level?” Linley looked at the War God, puzzled.

The War God shook his head slightly. “It isn't so easy to break through to the Deity-level. Even Cesar, with his extraordinary talent, spent five thousand years before reaching the Deity-level. As for me...although in the past, I had indeed reached the limits of the Saint-level, it was very hard to take that last step and break through. Five thousand years ago, during a battle, I was fortunate enough to acquire the divine spark of a Demigod. I absorbed and fused that divine spark...and thus, I became a Deity.”

Linley was stunned.

So the almighty War God whom everyone praised to the high heavens had actually broken through because he had acquired the divine spark of a Demigod.

“What, are you very disappointed?” The War God laughed calmly.

Linley shook his head. “No. It is very incredible that in the past, you were able to reach the limits of the Saint-level after only a few hundred years. Your eldest disciple,

Fain, has spent thousands of years training. By now, he should be at the limits of the Saint-level as well."

The War God laughed.

He was very satisfied with Linley's response. Indeed, reaching the limits of the Saint-level in a few centuries was extremely difficult.

"It is hard to reach the limits of the Saint-level. For someone to reach the limits of the Saint-level definitely means that they have already arrived at the very end of the path of the Elemental Laws they have chosen. To break past that barrier, what they need is a sudden insight! In an instant, they must fuse together and combine every part of the aspect of Elemental Law they are training in. Only then will they succeed in breaking through."

The War God sighed, "In the entire Yulan continent, up until a few decades ago, there had been six Prime Saints who had reached the limits of the Saint-level and only needed to take one more step before breaking through to the Deity-level. Now that Cesar has broken through, there are five Prime Saints remaining who are at the limits. One of them is Fain."

"Currently, in the Yulan continent, aside from those five Deities, the most powerful people are Fain and the other four. You should already know by now how powerful Fain is."

Linley nodded slightly.

Linley was now beginning to truly interact with the hidden aspects of the Yulan continent.

"Lord War God, what level of power does the Holy Emperor have, in comparison with those hidden experts?" In the future, Linley would definitely have to deal with the Holy Emperor. Naturally, he needed to ask this question.

"The Holy Emperor?"

The War God paused for a moment, then said, "Amongst the hidden experts of the continent, aside from the Deities, Fain and the other four Prime Saints are the most powerful. They need only a single step to reach the Deity-level. Beneath them are the likes of the Holy Emperor. There are roughly ten or so people on this level. Below them are those people on Haydson's level. Most of the experts who lie hidden here in the continent are on Haydson's level.

"The Holy Emperor is more powerful than Haydson?" Linley memorized this little fact.

The War God cast a warning glance at Linley. "The Holy Emperor trains in Oracular Magic. Oracular Magic is extremely powerful. It is normal for him to be on a higher level than Haydson."

Linley looked at the War God, then asked, "Lord War God, then what are the secrets of the Yulan continent? What are they?" Linley had been curious this entire time.

For what reason had the Yulan continent attracted so many experts to remain here on this plane?

"In the Four Higher Planes, there is another name for the plane of the Yulan continent." A hint of delight was in the War God's face.

"What name?" Linley's eyes lit up.

"The Necropolis of the Gods!" The War God said softly.

"The Necropolis of the Gods?" Linley's heart thumped. "Lord War God, even if Deities were to die, there's no reason they would have to come to our Yulan continent to be buried, is there?"

"Of course not." The War God laughed calmly. "Five thousand years ago, many of the experts who descended from other planes were Deities. There were even Gods and Highgods. They engaged in warfare and slaughter here in the Yulan continent. In the end, aside from a few who left, virtually all of those experts died here."

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"During one of those battles, I was extremely lucky. Although I had hidden far away, I managed to acquire a divine spark, and what's more, it was the divine spark of a Demigod. If it had been the divine spark of a full God, I wouldn't have been able to absorb and fuse with it at all." The War God laughed calmly.

Linley suddenly began to understand.

There were certain preconditions for one to fuse with a divine spark.

Someone who had not yet become a Deity probably would only be able to fuse with a Demigod's divine spark.

“Why did those experts from other planes descend to the Yulan continent and engage in battle here?” Linley immediately asked.

The War God glanced at Linley. “For now, you don’t need to know about this.” Clearly, the War God didn’t wish to tell Linley.

Linley had no choice but to remain silent.

“The Necropolis of the Gods will be opened once every thousand years. Each time it is opened, those who have received acknowledgment and permission from us Deities are permitted to enter the Necropolis of the Gods and engage in exploration.” The War God glanced at Linley. “But I must tell you, the Necropolis of the Gods is extremely dangerous!”

“Has anyone ever succeeded?” Linley asked.

“Of course.” The War God said with certainty. “But only one person. And the funny thing was, as soon as he acquired a Demigod divine spark and broke through, he immediately headed off to the Higher Planes.”

Linley secretly laughed.

To become a Deity was extremely hard.

But wouldn’t it be so much simpler to just acquire a divine spark from within the Necropolis of the Gods and then fuse it? No wonder so many of the lucky survivors of the past had decided to remain hidden here in the Yulan continent.

After all, it was virtually impossible for a Saint to acquire a divine spark in the Higher Planes.

“Lord War God, are there any differences between becoming a Deity through fusing with a divine spark and becoming a Deity through personal understandings and breakthroughs?” Linley asked.

The War God nodded and sighed. “There are. After absorbing and fusing with a divine spark, one’s future training becomes much more difficult. After all, the divine spark you fused with wasn’t one which had naturally descended upon you and formed within your soul. There are qualitative differences.”

Linley nodded.

In his heart, Linley deeply appreciated the fact that the War God had provided him with this important piece of information.

"But despite that, so what? Linley, if I placed a divine spark in front of you and told you that if you fused with it, you would become a Demigod, with the price being that your future training would be slower and more difficult...would you be willing to fuse with it?" The War God looked at Linley.

Linley was startled.

Indeed. If a Demigod's divine spark was placed in front of him, which represented the chance to become a Deity, despite knowing that one's future training would become more difficult...most likely, many people would choose to immediately absorb and fuse with the divine spark.

"Enough. Linley, if there's nothing else, you can leave now." The War God said calmly.

Linley hurriedly said. "Lord War God, in a few days, I plan to go to the Anarchic Lands. My little brother Wharton will probably remain in the imperial capital. I am worried that the forces of the Radiant Church will threaten my little brother..."

"Don't worry. The imperial capital is not a place where the Radiant Church can act as they please." The War God said calmly.

Hearing these words from the War God, Linley felt calmer.

"Lord War God, the current Emperor, Johann..." Linley didn't even finish speaking before the War God frowned and said, "I gave you my talisman. Just show it to Johann, and he will know that it represents my authority. Each generation of Emperors knows this."

Linley was startled.

The talisman with the word 'War' on it which the War God had bequeathed unto him previously actually had this function as well?

The War God glanced coldly at Linley. "But you had better not use the talisman too wildly. If you throw the Empire into a state of chaos, then you will be the one to fix it. Oh, right. When you go to the Anarchic Lands, there is a person you must remember not to offend."

"Who?" Linley was startled.

The Anarchic Lands didn't have any famous experts, right?

The War God said calmly, "One of the five Prime Saints lives in the Anarchic Lands. His name is Desri [De'si'li]. He trains in the Laws of Light. His power is on par with Fain's."

Linley immediately memorized this name.

Someone who was on par with Fain was a person who was only a step away from becoming a Deity.

"Enough. You can leave now." The War God said calmly.

Linley immediately bowed, then turned and prepared to leave.

"Remember to treat with kindness that magical beast of yours, Bebe." The War God said with a sudden sigh.

Shocked, Linley turned his head to stare at the War God. Linley wasn't surprised that the War God knew of Bebe's existence, but why had the War God just told him to treat Bebe well?

The War God paid no more attention to Linley. With one step, his scarlet hair flowing around him, he entered that hovering ball of fire once more and returned to his training.

"Bebe?"

Linley actually felt that the War God was being a bit too nice to him. Whether it was with regards to Wharton's wedding, or telling him so many things on this visit...Linley now felt that this had to do with Bebe.

Bebe?

Linley still remembered how Bebe had told him that he came from a clan known as the 'Beirut' clan.

"Bebe's power is terrifying, and his rate of growth is astonishing as well. And he comes from the Beirut clan. Now, the War God says..." Linley suddenly began to question Bebe's identity.

The imperial capital of Channe. The imperial palace. Within the flower gardens.

Emperor Johann was in a wonderful mood. He leisurely strolled about in his flower gardens, enjoying the sight of all sorts of beautiful flowers. With Linley no longer looking into Reynolds' affair, he naturally felt much more relaxed.

"Your Imperial Majesty, someone is flying over." His personal attendant suddenly said.

Someone was flying over?

A Saint-level expert!

Emperor Johann immediately turned to look. In the skies, he saw a blue-robed Linley soaring in his direction. In the blink of an eye, Linley arrived in the flower gardens.

"Oh, so it is Master Linley." A smile immediately blossomed on Emperor Johann's face. "Is there something you need, Master Linley?"

Linley glanced at the palace attendant.

"Leave for now." Emperor Johann said to his nearby attendant, who immediately walked far into the distance. Now there was only Linley and Emperor Johann, with no one else nearby. Even the guards were over a hundred meters away.

Linley stared emotionlessly at Emperor Johann.

Stared at by Linley in such a manner, Emperor Johann began to feel puzzled and uneasy. Could it be that Linley had discovered that Reynolds' death had to do with Julin?

"Emperor Johann, do you still believe that you've told me the complete truth regarding Reynolds' dying in battle?" Linley stared at Emperor Johann.

Emperor Johann's heart immediately plummeted. He felt as though he had suddenly fallen into a bottomless abyss.

Emperor Johann was no fool. Hearing Linley's words, he naturally could guess that Linley perhaps already knew everything.

"Linley, that was the report that came from the military. It shouldn't be fake." Emperor Johann said seriously. The meaning of his words were clear; even if the information was wrong, it was the fault of the military reporters, and didn't have anything to do with him, Johann.

Linley glanced at Emperor Johann.

"Emperor Johann, based on what I have learned, my dear friend Reynolds had led a group of knights in a scouting trip, but had been pursued by the forces of the Rohault Empire to the walls of the city of Neil. The pursuing forces of the Rohault

Empire numbered only three hundred! But at that time, Prince Julin actually ordered the soldiers to stay put and guard the city from inside, out of fear!"

The look on Johann's face changed.

"Faced with three hundred people, why would a garrison of tens of thousands of soldiers have to stand their ground inside the city of Neil?" Linley's voice grew even colder. "My brother, Reynolds, and his dozens of subordinates were shouting for the gates to be opened from the base of the walls. But Prince Julin actually ordered that the gates were to remain shut. And thus like that...Reynolds and his men lost their lives, for no purpose whatsoever!"

Linley stared coldly at Johann. "Emperor Johann. Tell me. How should we resolve this affair?"

Emperor Johann already knew that there was no way to favorably resolve this situation. He didn't dare to lie or to equivocate. In front of a peak-stage Saint, would excuses be of any use?

Johann's face turned steely. "Julin, that bastard!"

Johann looked at Linley with fury in his eyes. "Master Linley, We had no idea that Julin actually did something like this. He has brought utter shame upon our Empire. Master Linley, please don't worry. We guarantee you that We will definitely take severe actions to censure him. Tomorrow, no, immediately, We shall send our senior ministers to go to the Southeast Administrative Province and strictly investigate this matter. We definitely will not let off anyone who committed any major crimes with a light punishment!"

Linley had seen through Johann's little ploy from the very beginning.

Johann would 'send someone'?

Even if they discovered anything, they wouldn't find Prince Julin guilty of any serious crime.

"Your Imperial Majesty, no need to trouble yourself. Whoever caused my brother to die, I shall make them die." Linley's voice was cold and fierce, causing Johann's heart to quiver.

But Emperor Johann was frantic as well.

Linley was actually saying he was going to directly kill Julin! He was going to go kill Johann's brother? He, Johann, only had a single brother. What was Reynolds? Nothing more than a common noble. If he died, he died.

How could Reynolds' life compare to Johann's brother's life?

"Linley, the Empire has our imperial laws." Emperor Johann said in a cold voice.

For his little brother's sake, he had decided to try and face Linley head on for once.

Linley looked at Emperor Johann. With a cold, calm voice, he said, "Dare I ask, according to military law, what is the punishment for someone who is afraid to do battle against an enemy of just three hundred soldiers, and even stands by and does nothing as his own soldiers are slaughtered?"

"The penalty is indeed death." Johann nodded. "However, an investigation is still needed to find out exactly what happened."

Linley glanced at Johann. "What happened is quite clear. I've only come to inform you of what I am going to do. Johann...do not press your luck. Do not think you can use worldly laws to bind and restrict me."

Saint-level experts were indeed free of worldly laws and restrictions.

Emperor Johann stared at Linley. Suddenly, he said in a soft, begging voice, "Linley, you have a little brother as well. You should understand how I feel."

"Haha..." Linley laughed loudly. "Your Imperial Majesty, it seems you are suggesting that so long as one has an older brother, then they can kill any of my brothers with impunity, and then have their older brother say to me, 'You have a little brother as well? And then let me pardon their little brother?'"

Linley's face was so cold, it seemed like a layer of frost was covering it. "How laughable!"

It was indeed laughable. Someone had killed his bro, and now was trying to stir up sympathy by talking about the relationship between older and younger brothers.

"Linley, you..." Emperor Johann was furious.

"Johann, I hope that you won't let yourself act rashly. Otherwise..." With a flip of his hand, Linley retrieved the scarlet talisman which the War God had given him.

Emperor Johann, upon seeing the talisman in Linley's hands, seemed to have had a bucket of ice water poured onto his head. His entire body began to shake.

“The War God’s Talisman?” Johann stared disbelievingly at the talisman.

After the founding of the O’Brien Empire, the War God, O’Brien, had abdicated and given the throne to his son, who had passed it down over time to future generations. Every generation of Emperors knew that the War God’s Talisman represented the War God himself!

Whosoever held this War God’s Talisman even had the power to force the Emperor to abdicate!

Naturally, very few people were in possession of the War God’s Talisman, and those people wouldn’t dare to falsify an order from the War God.

“It’s good that you recognize the War God’s Talisman.” Linley looked calmly at Emperor Johann. “Emperor Johann, I don’t care about the fact that you don’t handle affairs with impartiality. I, Linley, am not the sort of person to consider myself the epitome of honor and righteousness. However, don’t try to put on any airs around me and restrict me. I won’t offend others, but I don’t wish for others to offend me either.”

“Also. I do not wish to see you scheme against or act against the Dunstan clan, the clan of my friend Reynolds.” Linley said calmly. And then, Linley immediately took to the air and flew off towards the east.

Johann watched as Linley flew eastwards.

He knew...that Linley was heading to the Southeast Administrative Province to go kill his younger brother. But did he dare to stop him? Right now, Johann didn’t even dare to try and verbally argue with Linley.

He was the Emperor, true.

But who had given him his authority? The War God! A single word from the War God could force him to abdicate. By then, he, Johann, wouldn’t have any authority at all. The loss of his younger brother’s life, or the loss of his Imperial power...which was more important?

Johann chose himself.

The wind blew with dreary force as Linley flew at high speed towards the Southeast Administrative Province. At this time, a black light suddenly flew towards him at high speed from the imperial capital, soon reaching Linley’s side. It was Bebe!

“Boss, how’d it go?” Bebe asked.

“Although Johann dotes on his little brother, he values his Imperial power even more. I didn’t have to say anything. All I did was take out the War God’s Talisman, and he no longer dared to make a sound.” Linley chuckled.

Worldly power?

That was nothing more than secondary, and bequeathed upon you by others at that. Only true personal power, developed by training, was truly effective. No wonder the War God didn’t want to be Emperor, but instead spent his time in quiet training.

Linley and Bebe, the man and the magical beast, flew east at high speed, and in the blink of an eye disappeared into the eastern horizon.

Chapter 42

Emperor Johann lay down on a bench within the imperial palace’s flower gardens, feeling utterly powerless. A weak, pale look was on his face. His eyes were closed, and he was silent. The only thing the nearby palace attendant could do was to carefully take care of him. The palace attendant was very puzzled. “Just then, his Imperial Majesty was in a fine mood. But after chatting a while with Master Linley, he became like this?”

Emperor Johann’s eyes suddenly opened.

“Transmit this decree. Marquis Jeff is to go to the Central Administrative Province and join with the Jacques Legion. Let Legion Commander Lace arrange a relaxed assignment for him. Unless there are special circumstances, Marquis Jeff is not to be permitted to return to the imperial capital.” Emperor Johann said calmly. He truly did not wish to see Marquis Jeff again. Whenever he saw Marquis Jeff, he would be reminded of Prince Julin.

The event which occurred today was the deepest humiliation in Emperor Johann’s heart. But Emperor Johann knew that there was nothing he could do about it. All he could do was accept it.

Although the palace attendant was puzzled by the Emperor’s orders, he still said respectfully, “Yes, your Imperial Majesty!”

Emperor Johann sat back down on his seat. Suddenly, he seemed to have become much older.

From the imperial capital to the Southeast Administrative Province, even flying at high speed in a straight line, over two thousand kilometers had to be traversed. In mid-flight, the impatient Linley transformed into his full Dragonform, making haste towards the southeast at top speed.

When Linley had left the imperial capital, the sun had already sunk down to and reached the edges of the eastern horizon.

When Linley arrived at the provincial capital of the Southeast Administrative Province, the entire world had begun to grow dim, and the countless commoners had begun to sit down in their homes and prepare for dinner.

“Whoosh!” While flying towards the top of provincial capital in his Dragonform, Linley suddenly spread out his spiritual energy, easily encapsulating that luxurious castle in the center of the city within it.

Prince Julin was living there. “Boss, should I handle it?” Bebe was flying side by side with Linley.

“No!” Whenever Linley thought of his bro, Reynolds, the flames of fury in his heart burned ever hotter. Although he had flown here at high speed, Linley still felt that this trip had been a long one. Too long!

Linley’s dark golden eyes had turned slightly bloodshot.

“Julin!” Linley ground his teeth and said in a low voice, and then his dark golden eyes became all the more grim and callous.

Thousands of guards were currently on patrol outside the administrator’s castle of the Southeast Administrative Province’s provincial capital. There were many beautiful maids and servants walking about the castle as well.

Within one quiet, secluded room within the castle. Behind a hazy gauze screen. The sound of low panting. A coquettish voice moaning nonstop. Two bodies intertwined with each other.

After a long moment...

A low growl. And then, the room returned to utter silence.

“Your Imperial Highness.” A soft, sweet voice.

"Baby, you really are bewitching. You are much better than my wife." Prince Julin opened the gauze screen, then put on his long robe and left the bed. "Baby, rest here. I'll order someone to bring you food."

"Thank you, your Imperial Highness." The woman behind the gauze screen had jade hair which cascaded down like a waterfall, and her eyes seemed utterly bewitching.

A hint of a satisfied smile was on the corner of Prince Julin's face.

He was very satisfied with his life.

What was so good about being an Emperor? As a Prince, he had as many servants as he wished and as many women as he wished. Wasn't this sort of life even better than that of a god's?

"That big brother of mine. Jeeze. All I did was cause that Reynolds to die, but he lectured and berated me." Prince Julin pursed his lips disdainfully.

His life was extremely valuable.

If a common noble died, he died. What was the big deal about it? Prince Julin's absolute bottom line was this; anything which might threaten his life, no matter how small, had to be stopped.

Prince Julin walked out of the room, feeling satisfied.

"Your Imperial Highness." The two female attendants outside the room said respectfully.

Prince Julin gently stroked the face of one of the female attendants. Laughing lightly, he said, "Baby, tonight, you can come serve me."

"Yes, your Imperial Highness." A hint of joy actually appeared on that female attendant's face.

Just as Prince Julin was feeling that his life was simply too perfect, a cold voice rang out from the skies above, covering the entire castle. "Prince Julin, are you enjoying your life?" That voice was filled with resentment and hatred, causing Prince Julin to suddenly tremble.

"Who is it?!" The castle guards all raised their weapons and roared angrily.

"Up above. Ahhh! It is a demon!" A guard saw Linley standing in mid-air.

Prince Julin's heart was filled with terror and fear. He didn't know who had come to act against him. The people whom Prince Julin had offended were all people who were inferior in status to him. Prince Julin knew very well that some powerful experts were not to be offended. So who was this? Prince Julin raised his head high...and his face turned ashen in terror.

Linley was currently standing in mid-air above Prince Julin's residence. In full Dragonform, Linley was surrounded by a dense fog of azurish-black battle-qi, which swirled and roiled about him. Linley did indeed look like a demon from the abyss.

His dark golden eyes were staring down at Prince Julin.

All Linley had done was to use his spiritual energy to search and investigate. After hearing Prince Julin's words to the two female attendants, he knew that this person was indeed Prince Julin.

Linley's body suddenly descended, and a terrifying surge of energy blasted out in every direction.

"Boom!"

The nearby buildings were all blown apart by this terrifying blast of force. Linley landed heavily on the ground, and the stone floor of the residence instantly cracked and shattered, as though it had been struck by a massive falling boulder.

"Milord, who are you?" Prince Julin squeezed out a smile, appearing to be incredibly humble.

The man in front of him was a Saint. Prince Julin was absolutely certain of this.

Prince Julin deeply cared about his life, so he never offended any Saints.

"Milord, is there perhaps some mistake? Why have you sought me out?" Prince Julin forcibly maintained his smile, but just at this time, from afar, a guard's voice could be heard. "Your Imperial Highness, that person is Master Linley. I went to the imperial capital and watched his duel with Lord Haydson."

Many people had watched the duel between Linley and Haydson. People from the Southeast Administrative Province had gone as well. Naturally, that guard recognized Linley.

Prince Julin hadn't gone.

To Prince Julin, watching experts fight wasn't as interesting as playing around with some beautiful women. It was fortunate for him that he was the Emperor's younger brother, because otherwise, in a country like the O'Brien Empire, where people worshipped experts and valued training and personal strength, his life would have been terrible.

"Master Linley?"

Prince Julin's heart shook. What he had feared the most had come! Previously, at Neil City, he had caused Reynolds' death. After Prince Julin had discovered the relationship between Linley and Reynolds, he was filled with regret, but it was too late.

"What the hell did my big brother do? Didn't he say that Linley didn't know that this affair had something to do with me?" Prince Julin began to curse Johann in his heart. Meanwhile, Linley just stared at Prince Julin.

His dear brother, Reynolds, had died because this Julin had extinguished Reynolds' last chance at life due to his own cowardice. His dear brother didn't have to die.

"Do you know why I have come?" Linley was unable to restrain his fury any longer.

"Ah! So it is Master Linley!" Prince Julin hurriedly said. "It is Julin's honor to be able to welcome you here, Master. But I actually do not know why you have come here, Master."

By now, groups of people had clustered around them, watching.

There were many of Prince Julin's women, some of his children, and many guards and female attendants. They all watched with terror. Even the two experts of the ninth rank who were Prince Julin's special guests stood far away, their hearts filled with terror.

"Master Linley, if there's anything you want, please speak calmly. I think, Master, you must have some sort of misunderstanding about his Imperial Highness." The caretaker of the castle said from the side in a trembling voice.

Linley turned back to glance at the caretaker, whose face instantly turned white.

"Misunderstanding?"

Linley walked towards Prince Julin, one step at a time. Cold sweat poured from Prince Julin's forehead. He was so frightened that not a hint of blood could be seen in his face. Linley's lips quirked upwards, revealing a terrifying smile.

“Whoosh!” Linley’s ferocious black draconic tail suddenly moved, wrapping around Prince Julin’s body and constricting him like a whip.

“Ah!!!” An shrill scream burst out from Prince Julin’s throat, sounding like a woman being molested.

Linley’s dark golden eyes stared remorselessly at Prince Julin. “Why are you screaming? I haven’t even used any force, but you are already screaming. If I were to use force...”

“Spare me, Master Linley, spare me.” Prince Julin said, terror-stricken.

“Spare you?”

Linley’s voice suddenly turned into a guttural growl. “Me, spare you? What about my brother Reynolds? Who spared his life?” Linley’s black draconic tail, radiating a cold light, began to squeeze while lifting Prince Julin into the air.

Prince Julin was constricted and lifted into the air by this draconic tail which was as thick as a strong man’s arm. As the tail began to tremble slightly, Prince Julin began to howl in terror. “Ah!!” “Slash.” Fresh blood began to dye Prince Julin’s clothes red.

“Stop!” Many of the loyal guards raised their weapons from afar and howled angrily. They didn’t dare to charge forwards, but they did dare to at least shout.

“F*ck off!” Linley frowned, his heart filled with fury.

“Boom!” A terrifying surge of energy erupted from Linley, blasting out in every direction. All of the surrounding guards and female attendants were sent flying. Some unlucky guards ended up smashing into walls head first, with their brains splattering. Others fell to the ground and were heavily injured.

In the blink of an eye, aside from Linley and Prince Julin, not a single person was still on his or her feet.

“The Boss has really gone crazy.” Bebe watched quietly from midair.

Linley retracted his gaze from the surrounding people, turning to stare at the bloody-faced Prince Julin. “Julin, don’t worry. I’ll let you live for a bit longer...I’ll let you have the sensation of a slow death.” Linley’s voice was very soft, but it filled Prince Julin with the utmost fear.

"Master, please spare me. I'll do anything you want, give you anything you want, as long as I am capable, anything is fine, but the important thing, don't kill me." Prince Julin still thought that he could escape from this situation alive.

Linley didn't pay any attention to Prince Julin's squabbling. The only thing in his mind was the smile of his Fourth Bro, Reynolds. That adorable youngster, so dissolute and lazy, had spent ten days and ten nights waiting for him in a blizzard when he had been carving 'Awakening From the Dream'.

"Crunch." A cringe-inducing sound could be heard from Prince Julin's entire body.

His waist had suddenly become compacted to the waist of a slender young lady. Prince Julin's face was utterly red. He wasn't able to say a single sentence, and fresh blood was leaking forward from his mouth.

"Spare...spare..." Prince Julin stared at Linley in terror.

The distant serving women and attendants all watched with terror as Prince Julin's waist visibly became smaller and smaller.

"Crunch!" Yet another bone-splintering sound could be heard. Blood was pouring forth from Prince Julin's mouth, and his face had turned the color of purple jam.

The internal organs in his body had been squeezed to the point of rupture. This sort of pain made Prince Julin wish he could die.

"You can't die so fast." Prince Julin's endurance was far weaker than that of Clayde's, from all those years ago.

Suddenly, Linley's draconic tail loosened and retracted. That nearly-dead Prince Julin fell to the ground. Prince Julin let out a sigh of relief, but before he even hit the ground...

"Bam!" Linley's right leg kicked viciously against Prince Julin's body.

Prince Julin's eyes turned round from utter terror.

Prince Julin's body was sent flying from this kick, and he smashed hard against a distant wall. That thick, sturdy wall was actually shattered by the collision. As for Prince Julin? His weak, fragile body instantly disintegrated into a pile of mud-like flesh and bone, strewn everywhere.

“Fourth Bro, don’t worry. I won’t spare a single one of those people who caused you to die.” Linley said softly to himself. A hint of moisture could be seen in those dark golden eyes.

Linley turned to look at Bebe in mid-air.

“Let’s go. We’re heading to Neil City!”

“Whoosh!” Linley rose straight into the air, flying towards the southeast at high speed with Bebe by his side. The thousands of people in the area below were utterly, deathly silent. Only, Prince Julin’s utterly disintegrated corpse was so eye-catching and so frightful to behold!

Chapter 43

If Reynolds was alive, he wanted to see him. If Reynolds was dead, he wanted to see Reynolds’ corpse!

From Yale, Linley had learned that Reynolds’ corpse had actually been taken away by the enemy. On this trip, no matter what, he had to bring his friend’s corpse back. However, before that, Linley had to pay a visit to Neil City. After all, the soldiers of Neil City should have known exactly what happened on the day Reynolds was killed.

“Boss, don’t be too heartbroken.” Bebe said softly.

Linley stared at the distant horizon, then turned to glance at Bebe, forcing out a smile. “Bebe, I’m fine.” But it was hard to make out any expressions on the face of the Dragonformed Linley; all that could be seen was the corners of his lips curving slightly.

After flying for a while, the distant Neil City appeared in the desolate landscape.

“We’re arriving.” The temperature around Linley suddenly dropped by a level.

The army of the O’Brien Empire was currently camped a few dozen kilometers outside Neil City. Ten kilometers away, facing them, was the army of the Rohault Empire. The two armies stared at each other.

After Prince Julin had left the city, the Golden Flame Legion had quickly exacted revenge for Reynolds. But the Rohault Empire had been prepared already, and they wouldn’t lower their heads either. The two armies had engaged in multiple

engagements, with tens of thousands of casualties. They were now at a temporary halt, but the next attack could come at any moment.

Right now, the garrison of Neil City was fairly relaxed. After all, there was an army of tens of thousands in front of them.

“Man, that Prince-whatever was such a coward. He let the enemy make it all the way to our walls, and didn’t even let us go out.” A couple of garrison guards were huddled together in a corner of the walls, chatting idly.

“What a tragedy. Senior Captain Reynolds died such an unjust death, and even his corpse was taken away.”

The Golden Flame Legion was, without question, an extremely elite legion. What happened last time at the walls of Neil City was, without a doubt, a mark of shame for the entire Golden Flame Legion. But the military commanders at that time hadn’t dared to disobey the orders of Prince Julin.

“Who are you?!” Suddenly, terrified, angry shouts could be heard from outside. One soldier after another stopped resting in their cubbyholes and came out, but when they saw the Dragonformed person standing in mid-air, wrapped within a cocoon of azurish-black mist, they were all stunned.

They were elite soldiers, elite soldiers who constantly lived on the line between life and death.

But when they saw this expert standing in mid-air, they understood that this aberration was definitely a Saint-level expert. These soldiers didn’t have any ability to fight against him at all.

“You...you are Master Linley?” Suddenly, a military officer whispered these words.

The eyes of the surrounding elite soldiers suddenly lit up. Linley’s Dragonformed appearance had become the stuff of legends. Those elite warriors carefully inspected the cloud-shrouded Linley’s appearance. Indeed, he looked very much like how the legends said he did.

“It is I.” A dark whisper drifted out from within that azurish-black mist.

Master Linley. A genius magus. A grandmaster sculptor. A peak-stage Saint. The pride of the entire O’Brien Empire...countless people in the Empire worshipped Linley. After realizing that this aberration was Linley, the surrounding warriors actually began to feel that Linley’s transformation was extremely ‘manly’ and very ‘ferocious’.

These were valiant warriors indeed.

"Master Linley, if there is anything you need, please just ask us." The military officer hurriedly said.

"A while ago, a group of your scouts were encountered and attacked by the Rohault Empire's forces, and were chased all the way to the city walls. The senior captain of that group was named Reynolds, correct?" Linley's voice was hoarse.

The military officer said, "Yes, Master Linley."

All of the surrounding soldiers felt a deep sense of humiliation. Even Master Linley had learned of the Golden Flame Legion's shame. All of them felt extremely awkward and embarrassed.

"Where is Reynolds' corpse?" Linley asked.

"Master Linley, Lord Reynolds' corpse was taken away by the enemies." The military officer's face was turning a bit green. He truly felt ashamed. Before their very eyes, three hundred people had not only killed Reynolds and his men, they had even taken away Reynolds' corpse.

Linley asked, "Who here personally witnessed what had happened on that day?"

Many people looked at each other. These people had only heard of what happened to Reynolds. That squad of soldiers who had been on the walls and had personally witnessed what had happened had all been punished and sent to the front lines to do battle with the enemies.

Seeing the expression on their faces, Linley frowned.

"I...I witnessed it." An ancient-sounding voice rang out from behind. All of the soldiers parted, allowing a lavishly dressed old man walk over. This old man was the governor of Neil City.

"Lord Governor!" All the surrounding soldiers bowed respectfully.

Staring at Linley and the azurish-black cloud surrounding him, the city governor sighed secretly. As the city governor of a border city like Neil City, how could he possibly be a soft, spineless person? At that time, he had been accompanying Prince Julin. When he had seen Reynolds and the others being pursued, he was just about to order his men to go rescue them.

But at that time, Prince Julin's attitude clearly showed that he would not permit anyone to go outside. They had to stand their ground inside the walls! The city governor was already quite old, and he had sons and grandsons. He didn't dare to disobey the order of Prince Julin.

"You are the city governor of Neil City? Good. Clearly explain to me what happened that day when Reynolds was pursued here and killed." Linley said coldly.

The city governor nodded. "When Reynolds and his men fled here, they had all been wounded. There was an arrow sticking out from Reynolds' shoulders. When they reached the walls, ten or so experts of the enemy came rushing over, ignoring the arrows of the garrison troops as they immediately began to slaughter Reynolds and the others. Reynolds was slashed to death by a blow to his chest, and then the leader of the enemy forces took him away."

Linley secretly nodded to himself.

The Dawson Conglomerate's intelligence was indeed accurate.

"The leader of the enemies? Do you know where he is?" Linley stared at the city governor of Neil. "I must find and reclaim Reynolds' corpse."

The city governor of Neil nodded. "Right now, the legions of the Rohault Empire are currently in a deadlock against our legion. They are located a few dozen kilometers outside of Neil City. I imagine their leader is there as well. Right...the leader should be a warrior of the eighth rank."

"Oh..."

Linley turned to stare towards the south. He could clearly smell the scent of battle and blood in that direction. The bloody scent created by the deaths of tens of thousands was extremely thick!

"Bebe, let's go."

"Boom!" A terrifying sonic boom could be heard as Linley and Bebe, the man and the magical beast, slashed through the air, disappearing into the southern horizons. Seeing this, the city governor of Neil had a hint of excitement on his face. "Looks like those bastards of the Rohault Empire are in for it now."

The city governor of Neil immediately descended from the walls and led a small squad out of the city into the direction of the Golden Flame Legion's camp.

The two armies of the two Empires stared at each other. Within the central battlefield, many soldiers were carting away the corpses of their own people. At a time like this, the two legions had quite conscientiously paused their battle.

The corpses were carried away, one after the other. At this time, the already faintly red earth was stained even more crimson, and the stench of blood had attracted quite a few locusts.

In the camp of the army of the Rohault Empire's, their military flag was gently waving in the breeze. Multiple squads were out on patrol. Suddenly, an azurish-black cloud appeared in the air above the Rohault Empire's camp.

"Not here?" Linley's spiritual energy had encompassed the entire military camp, but he couldn't find Reynolds' corpse.

Senior Captain Hugh [Hu'ke] was currently in his tent, taking large gulps of strong liquor. He was in a wonderful mood. Hugh was certain that, after this battle, he would definitely be promoted.

"At the very least, I will be promoted to deputy legion commander." Hugh mused to himself.

But right at this moment, a powerful force suddenly ripped apart his sturdy tent. Hugh was shocked. "What on earth? Have the enemies broken into our camp?" While thinking this, Hugh quickly rushed out, but when he did, he felt the wild, howling wind, so powerful that he couldn't even stand straight.

Staring at his surroundings, Hugh's face turned pale. He saw countless gusts of energy swirling about throughout the Rohault Empire's camp, and all of the soldiers found it hard to stand stable.

After a while, the wild wind disappeared.

"All of the military officers of the Rohault Empire are to report to the central gathering location. Quickly." A calm voice rang out from the sky. Everyone craned their heads upwards. They saw that constantly flowing azurish-black mist, and within that mist, they could vaguely see the form of a terrifying creature.

"I am Legion Commander Chastre [Sha'si'te] of the Rohault Empire's Wright [Lai'te] Legion. Might I ask why you have come here, esteemed expert?" Legion Commander Chastre said respectfully.

From the power the man had just displayed, Chastre knew that this was a terrifyingly powerful expert with the ability to destroy this entire legion.

The azurish-black mist was drawn closer to Linley's body, allowing the people below to clearly see what Linley looked like.

"Freak!"

"Demon!"

Many soldiers let out quiet cries of fear. Linley's body landed heavily on the ground, causing it to shake and cracks to appear. Linley's draconic tail swished about, gouging deep holes into the ground wherever it passed.

"Dare I ask, esteemed expert, are you Master Linley?" Chastre said respectfully.

Linley glanced at Chastre. The man was quite experienced, and lived up to being a legion commander. After Linley had become famous, news about his Dragonformed appearance had been widely spread as well.

"It is I." Linley said calmly.

The countless surrounding soldiers immediately felt a terrifying sense of pressure. They had all heard of how powerful Linley was, but Linley belonged to the O'Brien Empire's side. Right now, they were currently engaged in battle against the O'Brien Empire.

"Master Linley, can it be that you are going to violate the laws of war? As a Saint-level expert, are you also going to participate in this battle?" Chastre said in a voice that was neither humble nor offensive. When two Empires engaged in battle, unless it was a do-or-die final battle, Saint-level experts generally were not permitted to participate.

Linley glanced at him coldly. "I dislike others threatening me."

Chastre immediately no longer dared to make a sound. If Linley were to go wild, he was truly capable of annihilating this entire army. He didn't have any recourse...

"Speak. A while ago, you sent some people out on ambush and chased a scouting party of the O'Brien Empire to the city of Neil. Who was the leader of that squad of three hundred?" Linley said coldly.

When he said this, virtually all the surrounding soldiers turned to stare at the nearby Hugh.

Hugh's body quivered.

No one needed to say anything. Linley turned to look at Hugh as well, and Hugh immediately said respectfully, "Master Linley, a while ago, I did indeed lead my troops to kill a large squad and utterly annihilated them in the end."

"Utterly annihilated?" Hearing these words, the muscles beneath Linley's eyes twitched once.

Linley stared at Hugh, his cold gaze causing Hugh to feel as though he had suddenly sunk into a frozen land of ice. "I heard that you not only killed all the people in that squad, you also brought back the corpse of the senior captain."

"It is true." A look of arrogance appeared on Hugh's face. As far as Hugh was concerned, this was something worth being proud of.

Linley's heart shook.

The man in front of him had admitted to it, but the military camp didn't have Reynolds' corpse within it. Could it be that Reynolds' corpse had already been destroyed? When he thought of this possibility, the angry flames in Linley's heart burned even hotter.

With a flicker, Linley appeared in front of Hugh.

"Ah." Hugh didn't have the chance to run away. Stretching out one arm, Linley's powerful right hand clutched around Hugh's throat, lifting Hugh into the air.

Linley's dark golden eyes stared death at Hugh. "Do you know? The name of that senior captain was Reynolds. He was a friend for life of myself, Linley!" Linley ground his teeth.

The surrounding soldiers now all understood why Linley had come and done such a thing.

Hugh's eyes were filled with shocked understanding as well. At the same time, he could sense that the force Linley was exerting around his throat was increasing. His face turning red, he forced out one word after another with difficulty.

"No...that...that Reynolds...he...he didn't die!"

Linley was stunned.

His hand loosened, and Hugh collapsed to the ground. Hugh immediately held his throat in his hands and began to cough.

Chapter 44

“Fourth Bro didn’t die?” Stunned, Linley blurted these words out, but then he immediately came to himself. “Did you just say that Reynolds didn’t die?”

Right now, Linley’s heart was thumping madly. Shock, joy, worry, disbelief, excitement, fear...all sorts of emotions were intermixed in Linley’s chest. Right now, the only thing Linley could do was to stare expectantly at this military officer of the Rohault Empire in front of him.

Holding his throat, Hugh frantically said in fear, “It is true. He didn’t die. He really didn’t die.”

“Hugh, when you reported your military success, didn’t you say that the senior captain you captured had died already?” The nearby legion commander, Chastre, was frowning.

Lying to a Saint was extremely foolish. Chastre thought that Hugh was perhaps concocting a lie out of fear.

Linley stared at Hugh as well. He truly hoped that Hugh wasn’t lying.

“Speak, now.” Linley stared at Hugh. Every single person in the now-chaotic army camp was staring at Hugh. Hugh straightened his body, then hurriedly explained, “Master Linley, I truly am not lying. Back then, when I recovered that senior captain’s corpse, that is, Reynolds’ corpse, I carried the body myself. But afterwards, I discovered that this ‘corpse’ suddenly moved. Only then did I realize that he hadn’t died!”

Linley’s heart tightened.

An awkward look appeared on Hugh’s face. “Master Linley, this Reynolds was extremely handsome, and he was a noble, valuable magus. Based on the magic he used when my comrades and I were chasing him, he should most likely be a magus of the seventh rank. A handsome young magus of the seventh rank is extremely valuable on the slave market.”

Hearing this, Linley instantly understood.

The surrounding military officers all understood as well. In times of war, there would often be large numbers of slaves sold to slave trading organizations. The army was often on good terms with these organizations, and a handsome young magus of the seventh rank would definitely be a valuable commodity.

A magus of the seventh rank was a high and mighty figure.

To cause a magus like this to become a slave was something which some noble ladies truly liked. They would be willing to pay enormous sums of money to purchase such a slave. The price one would get from selling such a magus of the seventh rank would probably be far greater than any reward money which Hugh would have received from the army.

"Are you saying...that you sold Reynolds to a slave trading organization?" Linley asked.

"Right." Hugh said in terror. He now knew that Reynolds was Master Linley's bosom friend.

"How badly was Reynolds injured?" Linley said with concern. From the reports he had heard, Reynolds had suffered life-threatening wounds. Linley was worried about him.

Hugh said with absolute certainty, "Master Linley, don't worry. When I took Reynolds back, I immediately invited healers to come treat him. And then, after he was sold to the slave trading organization, those slave traders definitely wouldn't let such a valuable commodity die."

Valuable commodity?

In his heart, Linley was worried about his friend. Reynolds had fallen to the point of becoming a slave?

"Let's go. You will come with me to find that slave trading organization. You should know where it is, right?" Linley grabbed Hugh by his clothes, and Hugh hurriedly said, "Yes, this humble one remembers it very clearly."

The nearby Chastre snapped, "Hugh, from today onwards, you are to accompany Master Linley. Whatever Master Linley wishes you to do, you must obey." Chastre looked at Linley and said apologetically, "Master Linley, our deepest apologies. I hope you won't be too upset with us."

Chastre truly didn't have any other options.

Generally speaking, in times of war, both sides wouldn't dare to get the family and friends of Saints involved. After all, if a Saint was to go berserk, that would be quite terrifying.

In the annals of history, there had been more than a few cases of a Saint going berserk and killing tens of thousands of soldiers.

However, generally speaking, Saints were high and mighty people who stood above the fray. So long as you didn't offend them, they wouldn't stoop to causing troubles with ordinary people.

Linley glanced at Chastre, then snatched Hugh up. "Let's go." He suddenly rose into the air, and then flew alongside Bebe towards the south...

Watching Linley fly away, the entire military camp let out a collective sigh of relief. Facing such a powerful Saint, all of the warriors present truly didn't have anything they could do.

"Commanders, go now and manage your subordinates. I'm worried that the Golden Flame Legion will seize this opportunity to launch a sneak attack." Seeing how disorderly and dispirited the army camp was, Chastre couldn't help but feel worried. After all, their army was already in a state of disorder, and the spirit of the army had already been suppressed by Linley.

Chastre's prediction was correct. Not too long afterwards, the Golden Flame Legion once more began their ferocious assault.

Within a border city within the Rohault Empire. Hugh in hand, Linley descended upon a seemingly unremarkable estate, which had a number of exquisitely dressed guards within.

"Whoosh!" A sudden gust of wind came out of nowhere. Linley, now in human form again, appeared on the ground with Hugh in his clutches. Linley was no longer as grief-stricken and furious as he had been at the beginning, when he was preparing to avenge his brother's death. He was much calmer, now.

No matter what, at least his Fourth Bro was still alive.

"Old White [Huai'te]! Old White!" Hugh immediately began to yell at the top of his lungs as soon as he landed.

"Who are you guys?" Old White didn't come out, but quickly, over ten guards appeared in a circle around them, all of whom had their weapons at the ready, prepared to attack at any moment. Only then did a silver-haired old man in a gentleman's suit appear from a side door. Seeing Hugh, the silver-haired old man laughed loudly. "Oh, so it is my dear Hugh. Why are you in such a rush, to the point of charging straight in?"

"Hugh, who is this?" The old gentleman named 'White' had very sharp eyes. He instantly could tell that this man dressed in a black robe was quite extraordinary. After returning to human form, Linley hadn't changed his clothes, and so his pants were ripped and torn.

Linley frowned, glancing coldly at this Old White.

"Old White, this is Master Linley!" Hugh said hurriedly.

"Master Linley?" Old White was startled, and then a look of shock appeared on his face. "Could it be that this is the Dragonblood Warrior of the O'Brien Empire, Master Linley?"

Hugh hurriedly nodded. "I was flown over here by Master Linley."

Old White didn't dare to believe it. He was nothing more than a local supervisor for his slave trading organization. How could he be worth Master Linley, one of the towering figures of the Yulan continent, to come and visit him?

"Old White..." Linley looked at Old White.

"Master Linley." Old White was extremely humble.

Linley went straight to the point. "Old White, roughly a month ago, Hugh brought a young magus of the seventh rank and sold him to you, I believe."

Old White glanced at Hugh, then nodded towards Linley. "That is correct."

"That magus of the seventh rank, his name is Reynolds! He is the bosom friend of me, Linley!" Linley's voice was very calm, but his eyes stared coldly at Old White.

Old White's eyes instantly turned as round as an ox's. "Mas...Master Linley's bosom friend?!" Old White's eyes were filled with shock, terror, and disbelief.

Although these slave trading organizations were quite powerful and had some connections to the four major assassin's guilds, no matter how powerful they were, they wouldn't dare offend a Saint, much less a peak-stage Saint such as Linley!

"Hugh, you..." Old White stared furiously at Hugh.

It was Hugh who had sold that Reynolds to their organization. Their organization dared to sell almost anyone, even the disciples of major clans, but why had Hugh sold them the close friend of a Saint?

A bitter smile was on Hugh's face.

He didn't know either. If he knew, would he have dared to offend Reynolds? Now, Hugh's life was in Linley's hands.

"Old White." Linley spoke.

Old White's reaction speed was extremely fast. He hurriedly said to Linley, "Master Linley, don't worry. Since this Mr. Reynolds is your friend, Master Linley, our organization definitely will not do anything to Mr. Reynolds. I will immediately send someone to inform our headquarters..."

"What's the matter? Where is Reynolds?" Linley asked.

"This...this..." A hint of terror was on Old White's face. After all, Reynolds had been sold off as a slave almost a month ago.

Linley could sense that something was wrong, and he immediately barked, "Speak!"

Old White had a feeling of terror in his heart. If a Saint such as Linley were to grow angry with him, it was totally possible that their entire organization would be wiped off the map. He hurriedly said, "Master Linley, when Mr. Reynolds was brought here, we first arranged for his wounds to be treated, and then roughly ten days later, we sent him off with a large group of slaves in one shipment. From my understanding, Mr. Reynolds should probably already have arrived at our headquarters."

"Headquarters?" Linley frowned.

Hugh was puzzled as well. "Old White, what's this all about? Doesn't your organization usually sell off slaves directly at the slave markets? Why would you send Mr. Reynolds to your headquarters?"

Old White hurriedly said, "We do sell off ordinary slaves at the slave markets, yes, but Mr. Reynolds was different. He is a magus of the seventh rank! He poses an extremely great risk. If we were to sell Mr. Reynolds to a customer, and then Mr. Reynolds was to use a magic spell and kill the customer, then our organization would have to pay a huge fine."

Linley stared at Old White.

"Therefore, for powerful people such as Mr. Reynolds and other dangerous, top-quality slaves, they all are sent off to the headquarters, where they will be trained for three months. They will be trained and taught to never dare to disobey a command and obediently obey their masters. Only then would we deliver them to customers." Old White explained.

Linley's face changed.

Train them so they wouldn't dare to disobey? Obediently obey their masters' orders? The person being trained was an expert like Reynolds...Linley could totally imagine how sinister and terrifying this 'training' was.

"Where is your headquarters? Take me there." Linley's face changed and he immediately shouted.

Old White hesitated for a moment, but seeing the terrifying look in Linley's eyes, he immediately nodded. "Yes, Master Linley, I will immediately guide you to our headquarters."

"Our headquarters is deep within the Rohault Empire and is far from the borders. Given the winding roads, it is a journey of three thousand kilometers from here." Old White said.

"My Boss can just fly you over there." The nearby Bebe said unhappily. Bebe was worried for Reynolds as well. After all, when they were at the Ernst Institute, Bebe would often have fun alongside and play around alongside Reynolds.

Old White hurriedly nodded. He didn't dare to say a word.

"Master Linley, there's no need for me to go with you, right?" The nearby Hugh was filled with terror.

Linley turned to stare at Hugh. Currently, Reynolds was probably being tormented by those people in the slave trading organization's headquarters. Thinking of this, Linley couldn't help but feel a hint of fury.

"Slash!" A blurred claw swiped out. Hugh clutched his throat with terror, but fresh blood still flowed out of his throat. A few moments later, Hugh toppled to the floor.

Floating in mid-air, Bebe cast a dissatisfied glance at Hugh. "You bastard, you thought you would be able to save your worthless skin? Are you damn stupid or what? When you were killing the soldiers of Reynolds' corps, you thought it was quite enjoyable, right? Well, today, when I, Bebe, killed you, I felt it was very enjoyable as well."

Seeing this scene play out, Old White's body was trembling slightly.

"Old fellow, don't be afraid. As long as you obediently follow my Boss's orders, I, Bebe, definitely won't mistreat you." Bebe smiled widely, revealing his sharp fangs.

Old White had heard of how, during Linley's duel with Haydson, Linley's two Saint-level magical beasts had appeared, one of which seemed to be a mouse-type magical beast and which had easily trampled Haydson. Staring at the hovering Bebe, Old White was beginning to suspect that this Bebe was most likely that very terrifying magical beast.

Terrified, Old White could only force himself to smile at Bebe.

Linley snatched Old White then soared into the air, flying towards the southeast. "Old White, lead the way for me!" The terrified Old White cleared his throat a few times, stared at the ground below, then began to direct Linley towards their headquarters.

Chapter 45

Let us return to year 10009 of the Yulan calendar, September 21st. A few days had passed after Wharton and Nina's grand wedding. At this time, Linley was under the belief that Reynolds had died.

However...

"This is the third day on this ship. That bastard just tortured another slave to death, then tossed him into the river." Through the steel-barred windows, Reynolds could see the outside world. He had watched a seemingly powerful, yet blood-stained body be tossed into the river. A human being, just like that, sank into the river with a 'plop'.

In the army, Reynolds had already seen how worthless a human life was.

However, on this slave journey, Reynolds had been truly shocked by how terrifying these slavers were. Fortunately, he, Reynolds, was an extremely valuable commodity, and so those slavers didn't dare to kill him.

"Whap!" A whip struck Reynolds heavily on his body, and then against Reynolds' face. Instantly, a bloody welt could be seen forming on his face, and his ragged clothes were covered with rips as well.

"Motherfucker, what are you looking at?" A large whip-wielding thug shouted angrily at Reynolds.

Reynolds could only huddle into a corner of the ship, not daring to make a sound. He had learned to be obedient. If he wanted to try and be brave and stare back at him...he probably would be tortured this entire night.

This slaving vessel was extremely large. The bottommost deck held those cheapest of slaves. Those slavers would sometimes go down to that deck, and if they saw someone they disliked, they would strike them heavily.

Reynolds, as an extremely valuable slave, was imprisoned within a special room in the second level. The windows to this room were barred with steel, and there were two thugs on watch at all times.

Quite a few thugs were stationed in the other rooms on the second floor as well.

The third and uppermost floor was used for transporting the leaders of this slaving vessel. One was an expert of the eighth rank, while two were experts of the seventh rank. If it wasn't for Reynolds, this slaving vessel wouldn't have had an expert of the eighth rank sent along with it.

On the deck of this ship, a tall, strong, bald man walked down from the third floor.

"Lord Peel [Pi'er]." The surrounding thugs said respectfully.

Seeing the bloodstains on the deck of the ship, the bald man frowned. "Wipe those bloodstains away. Also, slaves are worth fucking money. All of you be careful when you hit them. Don't kill them. If you kill a slave, that means the organization will lose some money."

Those thugs didn't dare to make a sound.

The bald man snorted, then walked to the chain links at the deck's edge. The cool night wind blew against him as he enjoyed the beautiful night scenery of the Bonai [Bo'nai] River.

"Right. What's going on with that magus?" The bald man snorted.

A nearby thug immediately said obsequiously, "Lord Peel, that little pretty-boy magus started off all high and mighty, but after the boys spent a bit of time trainin' him these past few days, he's learned his lesson."

"Excellent." The bald man said calmly, "All of you, be careful and keep a close eye on that magus. The only valuable commodity we are escorting this time is that magus of the seventh rank. And, by the looks of it, this magus is a noble. When we sell him, the price will be extraordinarily high."

Those thugs all nodded.

A young magus of the seventh rank was definitely one of the best auction items that would appear in the slave markets. People would go even crazier for him than they would for a beautiful virgin.

“What’s that noise?” The bald man suddenly frowned, then turned his head and stared at the cabin. “That sick bastard keeps on coughing. Drag him out. Motherfucker, he pisses me off.” A hint of bloodlust was in the eyes of the bald man.

Soon, a skinny young man was dragged out. By the looks of him, he was eighteen or nineteen years old. His body was covered with a foul odor as well as bloodstains. The eyes of this youngster were rather vacant. This long period of imprisonment had caused him to go crazy. He was nothing more than a young man who had left his hometown in search of his dreams, but who would’ve thought that he would suddenly have been seized and sold to a slaving organization? Just like that, he had entered a nightmare.

“Hrm?” The bald man stretched his hand out, and a nearby thug very conscientiously filled it with a whip.

Holding the whip, the bald man cracked it in the air, creating a clear, crisp sound. Suddenly, a hint of fear appeared in the blank eyes of the youngster.

“If you aren’t dead, why do you keep coughing? You ruined the wonderful mood I was in.” The bald man suddenly landed a vicious whipping blow onto the skinny youth.

This whip blow was far stronger than the blows of those common thugs.

The skinny youngster’s body suddenly trembled violently, and a terrifyingly deep whip-scar was left from his face to his waist. Blood immediately began to flow out. As for his clothes, they were destroyed long ago.

“Whap!” “Whap!” “Whap!” “Whap!”

The bald man viciously whipped him, fully venting his temper on this poor young man’s body. The skinny youngster, quite experienced by now, immediately tried to protect his head and curled into a ball. What he thought was that as long as he could endure, he might still be able to preserve his life.

Sadly. Although the bald man didn’t dare to kill Reynolds, the bald man dared to kill him.

"Lord Peel, he's dead." A nearby thug whispered.

The bald man casually tossed his bloodstained whip to a nearby thug, then turned back to stare at the raging river waters, stretching lazily. "Damn, that feels good. You guys, toss that piece of trash overboard. Also, make sure you scrub the deck clean."

"Yes, Lord Peel." The surrounding thugs quickly began to work as instructed.

"Plop!" With a plopping sound, yet another body was tossed into the river.

Each slaving ship carried several hundred slaves within it, and on each trip, over ten would be tortured to death. The ones which the thugs would beat to death were the ones who were physically the weakest. The physically stronger ones would be able to hold on for longer. Thus, the slaving organization didn't lose too much.

"Yet another one." Reynolds sighed in his heart. He didn't expect that after managing to escape Neil City alive, he would have fallen to such a state.

Reynolds didn't know what his future would be like.

"Be a slave?" Thinking about the debased, dark life of a slave, Reynolds shuddered.

"Pretty-boy, what are you mumbling? Do you want to cast a spell?" With an angry roar and a 'WHAP!' sound, another whip blow came, striking him directly on his face.

Pain. Humiliation!

These thugs clearly knew that Reynolds was a magus of the seventh rank. All of those petty, despicable thugs wanted to whip Reynolds whenever they could, so as to satisfy their petty pride.

"Motherfucker, fuck off!" Reynolds was truly angry now.

The more he endured, the more overbearing these men became.

"Oh ho!" The thug with the whip raised an eyebrow, his lips curving into a sneer as he looked at Reynolds. "You still have the gall to be arrogant?" As he spoke, he struck out with another whip.

A ferocious light flashed in Reynolds eyes, and his lips quickly muttered the words to a magic spell.

“BAM!” A series of fireballs the size of a person’s head erupted out from Reynolds, striking out wildly towards those two thugs. In the blink of an eye, they had been encircled by over ten balls of fire.

“Ah!!!” Those two thugs screamed miserably, their entire bodies covered with flame. What’s more, these flames burned much hotter than ordinary, fire-stoked flames. The two thugs quickly had their skin turned into char. Soon, they stopped breathing.

Immediately after casting the spell, Reynolds charged outside.

But just then...

“Bam!” A sudden hole appeared in the ceiling of the room, and a one-eyed man wearing a red robe descended into the middle of the room. With a flash, he reached Reynolds, and then kicked Reynolds with his leg.

“Bam!” Reynolds was knocked into a corner of the cabin, hard. Blood spewed from his mouth.

The one-eyed, red-robed man glanced back at the two charred corpses, then stared coldly at Reynolds. “You are asking for death!” Reynolds stared back at the red-haired and red-robed one-eyed man.

“No wonder the organization insists on three months of special training. All of you are miserable wretches.” The one-eyed man cursed. Simply capturing an expert such as a magus of the seventh rank was not enough. To make them feel, in the deepest parts of their hearts, unable to resist any orders, was extremely difficult. If they were angered, they would go all out.

Moments later...

Multiple thugs grabbed Reynolds by his limbs, making sure he couldn’t move. The red-haired one-eyed man and two bald men stared coldly at Reynolds.

“Pretty-boy, I’ve reminded you that you need to be a good boy on my boat. But you, you make me very angry.” The red-haired one-eyed man said in a cold voice. “Peel, help him improve his memory.”

Reynolds’ face immediately turned pale.

He remembered the threat which the one-eyed man had previously made to him. The terror-stricken Reynolds stared with bulging eyes, but the bald man named Peel only laughed as he walked over. “Hold one of his hands down for me.” Immediately, the thugs grabbed Reynolds’ hands and pressed them against the deck.

From the deck, Peel retrieved a pair of steel pincers that were used for cutting through iron chains. He pressed the steel pincers around two of Reynolds' fingers. Sensing the cold feeling from his fingers, Reynolds' heart trembled.

"Hrmph. Squeeze." The one-eyed man sneered coldly.

The steel pincers clamped down, and as easily as cutting through cloth, Reynolds' two fingers were cut off. Fresh blood flowed out as piercing pain wracked Reynolds' body.

The pain of losing two fingers was far worse than even when he had received a blade chop on his body.

Hearing Reynolds agonized moans, the nearby thugs began to grow excited. The one-eyed man sneered coldly, "Pretty-boy, remember this. Today, all I did was teach you a little lesson. If you forget this lesson again, I guarantee...you will never forget the next lesson again." After speaking, the one-eyed man turned and walked away.

Dark night.

Reynolds was curled into the icy cold corner of the room, his body still trembling slightly. His severed finger-stubs had already clotted. The two nearby thugs occasionally looked at him, their eyes filled with madness.

Reynolds had killed two of their friends. These thugs naturally were filled with hatred towards him.

"Motherfucker. Pretty-boy."

A whip suddenly flashed out, aimed at Reynolds' wounded hand. Reynolds tried his best to hide his injured hand behind his back, but part of that whip still clipped his hand. An extreme wave of pain and agony came from his hand...the wound burst open yet again. In particular, the pain of the whip striking upon striking his finger bones was especially agonizing. It was as though his fingers had been chopped off yet again.

"Enough. Stop hitting him." The nearby thug said.

Actually, the two thugs were also afraid that Reynolds would go crazy once more and cast magic at them. However, the thug which had just hit Reynolds was on extremely good terms with one of the two thugs that had been killed. Naturally, he wanted revenge.

"I can't do this. I have to escape." Curled into a ball in the icy corner, Reynolds secretly thought to himself, "If this sort of life continues, I really will go insane."

Reynolds knew that even if he was able to persevere and hold on to his sanity, the only thing which would welcome him was the life of a slave.

"Tomorrow. Tomorrow, when the ship reaches the shore, I'll make my move." Reynolds had no time for any misgivings. Actually, every day this ship would stop at the shore. One reason was to replenish their food supplies; the other was because the one-eyed man didn't like to eat dry food. He preferred eating fresh delicacies. Thus, they had to go ashore to do so.

However, the one-eyed man was very careful. Whenever he went ashore to eat, the other two experts of the seventh rank would watch Reynolds.

Time passed very slowly. Lying on the floor late at night, Reynolds felt even colder. What's more, throbbing pain continued to come in waves from his severed fingers. He gritted his teeth and endured.

Slowly, the sky began to turn bright.

Those two thugs whipped Reynolds a few more times, but Reynolds only huddled in the corner, quietly accepting the blows. He knew that he couldn't resist. The first time he resisted, he had lost two fingers. The next time he resisted...then perhaps, like the one-eyed man had threatened, the next 'lesson' would be one he would never forget!

Reynolds quietly waited for the boat to near the shore.

After a long, long time...

"We've reached the shore." Ringing sounds could be heard from the deck above. Soon afterwards, the sound of footsteps could be heard. Clearly, the two experts had walked down.

"Peel, you two stand watch. I'll go rest for a bit, and then I'll come and change places with you two." The one-eyed man's voice could be heard.

"Milord, don't worry." Peel's voice rang out as well.

Hearing the footsteps head away from the ship, Reynolds let out a silent sigh of relief, and then he shut his eyes, once more mentally going through his escape plan.

The plan was very dangerous, but he had to give it a try.

Glancing at the two nearby thugs, Reynolds curled into a corner and lowered his head, and his lips began to slightly move...

Chapter 46

The red-haired one-eyed thug led a group of thugs off the slave ship, while Peel and the other bald man stood on the deck, casually chatting while occasionally glancing towards Reynolds.

"Peel, tomorrow, we'll finally reach the provincial capital. At that time, we'll send off those common slaves and have ourselves a good time. Spending every day on a boat is a damnable way to live." The bald man cursed in a whisper.

Peel began to laugh as well.

But just at this time, Peel suddenly heard a terrifying roar from a magical beast...

"Hooooowl!" All of a sudden, a terrifying, enormous flame serpent, as thick as a water barrel, came exploding out of the cabin, blasting a hole into the side of the ship.

The enormous fire serpent was as thick as a water barrel and over a hundred meters long. Howling, it circled around the slave ship, which instantly was set aflame. At the same time, the fire serpent charged directly towards the interior of the ship, blasting a hole through the entire vessel. Aside from around ten or so slaves in the bottom hold who were burnt to the death, the hundreds of other slaves wildly charged out from the hole in the ship which the fire serpent had made.

"Motherfucker. That pretty-boy!" Peel said, his face changing.

"Quick! Catch him!"

The two bald men immediately ran towards Reynolds room. At this time, they didn't care about the common slaves at all, but that enormous fire serpent actually charged straight towards the two of them.

"Motherfucker, a Blazing Fire Serpent. Be careful!" Peel and the other man were both nervous now.

Fire-style, spell of the seventh rank: Blazing Fire Serpent!

This was the most powerful spell which Reynolds could cast; the Blazing Fire Serpent. If this spell were to advance in level, it would transform into the eighth-

ranked spell, 'Dance of the Fire Serpents'. The 'Dance of the Fire Serpents' would create and attack with seven enormous fire serpents, and the temperature of the serpents would be even hotter. As for the Blazing Fire Serpent, it was still extremely powerful.

Most warriors of the seventh rank wouldn't dare to fight it head on.

The bald man, Peel, dodged as agilely as a fish, avoiding the attack of the Blazing Fire Serpent, while at the same time moving towards where Reynolds previously had been staying. In the room, Peel saw nothing but ash. Those two thugs' bodies had been charred to dust, and there were two large circular holes in the walls.

Clearly, Reynolds had fled via these two holes.

"Ah! Ah!!!" A miserable scream could be heard nearby. The other bald man hadn't been able to completely dodge the Blazing Fire Serpent. As soon as it had brushed by the man, the Blazing Fire Serpent immediately wrapped itself around him. The bald man's battle-qi armor quickly was depleted, and the sickly sweet smell of burnt flesh appeared.

Seeing this, the look on Peel's face changed.

"Dale [Da'luo]!!!!" Peel went insane. "You motherf*cking bastard!"

By now, many of the slaves who had escaped from the bottom of the boat had begun frantically fleeing in each direction. After having been captured as slaves, they had felt utterly hopeless, but now, all of them were filled with hope once more, and they frantically fled.

Peel charged out from within those two holes as well, and with a mighty leap, arrived directly onto the shore.

"That damnable pretty-boy." Peel stared at the slave ship in the Bonai River. The utterly demolished ship was slowly sinking, and it continued to burn with sheets of flame. Filled with smoke and fire and water, this ship was clearly finished.

"Peel, Dale!" A furious roar from afar.

The red-haired one-eyed man ran over at high speed, his single eye filled with unspeakable rage. Staring at Peel, he howled angrily, "Peel, where is he? Where is that magus?"

"Milord, that magus cast the Blazing Fire Serpent spell. No idea where he fled to. Dale died." Peel was furious as well.

The one-eyed man panted with fury.

The Blazing Fire Serpent was capable of dealing with warriors of the seventh rank, but if it had encountered the one-eyed man, given his power as a warrior of the eighth rank, he definitely would've been able to destroy the Blazing Fire Serpent and seize Reynolds.

This was the reason why his slaving organization had sent him, a warrior of the eighth rank, on this mission.

But the one-eyed man hadn't expected that right after he had taught that magus a lesson, he would dare to go all out like this.

"Quick, seize him. Bring that magus back." The one-eyed man immediately shouted towards the surrounding thugs. "The ten of you, split up and search upstream and downstream. The dozens of you over here, start searching the nearby area. You must bring that magus back to me. Quickly!"

"Yes, milord!"

The furious thugs scattered every which way. Most of their forces were concentrated in the surrounding area, while only five thugs were sent searching upstream and downstream.

Reynolds was dressed like the other slaves, in absolutely raggedy clothes, and his body was covered with scars. Because the other slaves had fled as well, on many occasions, those thugs would see some other slaves, think they were Reynolds, and immediately rush over to seize them. Unfortunately, they were wasting their time.

An hour later.

The one-eyed man stood at the harbor, his heart filled with rage as he stared angrily around him.

"Milord, we've discovered over ten slaves downstream, but we didn't find that magus." A thug ran over to report. The speed at which they had travelled on land was definitely faster than the speed of the flowing river.

"Milord, we didn't find that magus upstream either."

"Milord, we didn't find that magus in the surrounding areas. All we found were those common slaves."

Hearing one report after another from his subordinates, the one-eyed man stared at the surrounding area. He was so angry he could die. This harbor was the harbor for a small township. Their organization didn't have any forces here.

This was why the one-eyed man had no choice but to send those few dozen thugs to search for Reynolds.

Several dozen people had spent an hour without finding Reynolds. Then...there was no way he could be found. Because one hour was more than enough time for a person to travel a great distance. And how could several dozen people search an area of several dozen square kilometers?

"Bastard!" The one-eyed man snarled and cursed. "Let's go. We have to report this immediately to the organization. That pretty-boy better hope that I don't catch him. Otherwise...I will make sure his fate is worse than death."

The sky was dark now. The one-eyed man and the others had already left helplessly. Several thousand meters away, next to the riverbank, a human form emerged from the water.

"Patooley." Reynolds spat out the breathing reed from his mouth.

Glancing at his surroundings, Reynolds finally let out a long sigh. Reynolds hadn't dared to be the slightest bit incautious during this escape attempt. After casting his spell, he had immediately dove into the water, then plucked a hollow reed and used it to breathe. Each time he dove down, he would travel more than a thousand meters before daring to raise his head.

"I'm very far away now. Those people can't possibly find me now." Reynolds went onto the shore.

Reynolds body suddenly began to emit a white steam. A few moments later, Reynolds tattered clothes were totally dry again. Glancing at the surrounding area, Reynolds centered himself through using the flow of the river.

"That slaving organization has people in all the major cities. It is better if I stick to the smaller cities. I can't go back through the border between the two Empires. The slaving organizations have quite a few people in the border cities." Although Reynolds believed that they wouldn't spend too much effort searching for him, it was better for him to be careful. Reynolds had decided to first enter the Anarchic Lands through the Rohault Empire, and then return to the O'Brien Empire through the Anarchic Lands.

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The world was very dark now. The only light that could be seen was sporadic campfires. A dark shadow was flying through the skies, slashing through the air at high speed.

“Whoooooosh!” Their high-speed flight caused Old White to unconsciously narrow his eyes. From the skies, he could clearly make out the various roads, and so it was easy for him to make out the various landmarks.

“Master Linley, it is right below us.” Old White pointed at a distant countryside town.

“Oh? That little town is your organization’s headquarters?” Linley glanced at Old White. The town seemed no different from any other ordinary little town. In the darkness, a few lamp lights could be seen.

Old White hurriedly nodded. “It is. This is just some of our organization’s camouflaging abilities.”

“Whoosh!”

Linley immediately charged down, leaving a black shadowy trail of afterimages behind him. He landed in the middle of the headquarters of the slaving organization...this countryside town.

Linley was wearing a deep blue robe. Hovering up into the air, he loosened his hand, allowing Old White to fall to the ground. “Have the leader of your organization come out.”

Old White didn’t dare to disobey.

At this moment, a number of people ran over at high speed, surrounding them. But when they saw Linley was standing in mid-air, they were all stunned. Generally speaking, only Saints were capable of flight. Naturally, powerful wind-style magi could fly as well. In truth, right now, Linley was only capable of flight without transforming because he had already cast the Windshadow spell.

“Old White, why have you come?” A middle-aged madame glanced at Linley, then whispered to Old White.

Old White shouted loudly, “Quick, quick, have the leader come! This is Master Linley, the mighty Dragonblood Warrior, Master Linley!”

Master Linley?

These words were quite effective. A slaving organization, in terms of power, was far inferior to even the three major trading unions or the four great assassin's guilds. Naturally, it didn't dare to offend a Saint. Many people immediately ran to get their leaders, and all of the high-ranking people quickly began to assemble.

Linley stood there in mid-air, calmly waiting. Bebe stood atop of Linley's shoulders.

"Boss, this little town looked quite ordinary, but the insides of these buildings are quite unique! Many of them have underground basements." Bebe spoke to Linley mentally.

Linley nodded slightly.

In just a short while, a large group of people began to head in this direction from afar, with their leader being a tall, thin man who was dressed in a gaudy long robe. This man was half-running, half-walking, his forehead covered with sweat.

"Master Linley, my name is Dennis [Dan'ni'si], and I am the leader of this organization. Is there something we can do for you, Master Linley? If there is, please inform us, Master." The tall, thin man said humbly, filled with terror.

Although he had never met Linley before, a Saint who could hover in mid-air, no matter who he really was, wasn't someone he dared to offend.

Linley glanced at him, then said, "Dennis! A month ago, you bought a magus from Old White over at the border city. He should have arrived here by now."

Dennis was startled.

A somewhat fatter, older man next to Dennis hurriedly said, "Master Linley, I was responsible for this assignment. Halfway here, at the Bonai River, that magus burned our slaving vessel and fled."

"Fled?" Linley was surprised but also relieved.

Fourth Bro was quite impressive, to be able to escape from the clutches of the slaving organization.

Only now did Dennis come to his senses, and he nodded. "I'm aware of this event as well. After the magus fled, we sent our forces to some cities to try and recapture him, but we've yet to find him. This was over ten days ago now."

"Leader, that magus is Master Linley's bosom friend!" Old White hurriedly said.

Dennis' face immediately turned ugly to behold, while at the same time he was filled with fear.

Linley glanced at them. "From today onwards, you are forbidden from attempting to capture my friend." Dennis hurriedly said, "Of course. If we find him, we will definitely treat him as an honored guest."

Linley nodded calmly. Without wasting any more words, Linley and Bebe flew off and left.

Given the current situation, the slaving organization didn't really matter much now. Fourth Bro had escaped over ten days ago. By now, he should've fled quite far.

In mid-air.

"Bebe, you go back first. Immediately have Zassler and the others head out towards the Anarchic Lands. I plan to spend a bit of time scanning the area around the Bonai River and between the borders of the Rohault Empire and the O'Brien Empire. I want to see if I can find Fourth Bro. After I finish my search, I will join up with you." Linley had already come to this decision.

Searching using spiritual energy was actually quite a painful experience for most Saint-level warriors.

Most Saint-level warriors would only be able to occasionally search using their spiritual energy, because in truth, their spiritual energy wasn't extremely strong. It was magi who had powerful spiritual energy. In terms of spiritual energy, that Haydson who had been training for centuries was at most on par with Linley.

It would only take a short hour to cover that distance, but if one were to search carefully, one would definitely have to spend at least several days.

"Got it." Bebe obediently nodded his little head, then flew at high speed towards the O'Brien Empire.

Chapter 47

Transforming into his Dragonblood Warrior form, Linley began to trace from the Bonai River all the way to the border city of Neil, carefully scanning the surrounding areas. Every so often, he would have to rest to recover his spiritual energy.

He spent six full days and nights searching, and viewed all the nearby cities as well.

However...

He didn't find Reynolds.

"Master Linley, don't worry. As soon as our Dawson Conglomerate discovers young master Reynolds, we will definitely make sure he safely makes it back home."

A supervisor for the Dawson Conglomerate within one of the prefectural cities at the border of the Rohault Empire said respectfully to Linley.

Linley nodded slightly.

Right now, the only choice he had was to entrust this task to the Dawson Conglomerate. In his heart, Linley felt a bit puzzled. "Where did Fourth Bro run off to? Why didn't he go to the Dawson Conglomerate's branch headquarters? The Dawson Conglomerate has branches in each of the various prefectural cities."

Actually, Linley didn't understand.

Reynolds had been truly terrified by his time spent aboard that slaving vessel. Reynolds had decided that so long as he was within the borders of the Rohault Empire, no matter what, he would not enter any large cities. Although large cities had branch headquarters of the Dawson Conglomerate, it also had slaving organizations. If he were to be caught by slaving organizations, once he was discovered by them, he would be in dire straits.

"Any risk of being caught is too much risk. I'd rather take some side routes." Reynolds was very firm in his decision.

Given his power, heading towards the Anarchic Lands via some cross country travelling wasn't too hard. Once he reached the Anarchic Lands, he would then make contact with the Dawson Conglomerate. By then, he would be able to return safely.

By nightfall, in an ordinary courtyard within a prefectural city of the O'Brien Empire's Southeast Administrative Province. Zassler, the Barker brothers, Rebecca, Leena, and Jenne were all here.

The sound of knocking could be heard. Carrying that massive greataxe on his back, Gates strode forward and threw the door open. In front of the door were three attendants, all pushing food carts.

"What took you so long?" Gates swept the three men with his ox-like stare, causing their hearts to tremble. In front of the massive Gates, the three of them were like small children.

Suddenly, a bestial roar could be heard from the courtyard. The three attendants turned towards the sound...

The Blackcloud Panther, Haeru, lazily padded his way over. The natural, baleful aura of a top-class magical beast such as the Blackcloud Panther was more than enough to set hearts trembling. Haeru glanced at the three with his dark, cold eyes, and then disdainfully turned his head and lay down on the ground.

The three attendants exchanged glances, not daring to make any sound.

They immediately put all the plates of food onto the table, then quickly left. When they walked out of the courtyard, they wiped the cold sweat from their foreheads.

"Who the hell are these guys? Those five men were enormous!"

"And those axes were so huge. They have to weigh at least a thousand pounds each."

"And that old man. He looked like a skeleton. All he did was glance at me, and I felt fear. But those three ladies were certainly pretty. If I could marry such a beautiful girl, I'd be willing to have my lifespan shortened by a few dozen years."

In the eyes of these hotel attendants, the guests in this courtyard were definitely extremely, terrifyingly powerful entities. While Zassler and the others ate, Bebe and Haeru remained within the courtyard. This was because they could sense...that Linley was heading back at high speed.

A short while later, Linley, dressed in a deep blue robe, landed from the skies.

"Lord Linley." Barker and his brothers ran over to welcome him excitedly. Jenne, Rebecca, and Leena all came over to welcome him as well.

"Linley, how did it go? Did you find Reynolds?" Zassler asked.

Linley shook his head. Right now, Linley was in a fairly good mood. Since the slave trading organization hadn't found Reynolds, given Reynolds' power as a magus of the seventh rank, as long as he didn't anger someone powerful, he shouldn't be in any danger.

“Fourth Bro has been a soldier for many years now, and the slave trading organization is no longer after him either...given the circumstances, he should have a 100% chance of escaping and returning.” Linley was very confident in his friend.

“If Reynolds isn’t able to make it back safely under such favorable conditions, he wouldn’t be worthy of being your bro, Lord. The Rohault Empire is usually very stable and very safe.” Gates said loudly. “In the past, when we brothers were just warriors of the seventh rank, we lived a wonderful life in the Eighteen Northern Duchies.”

Linley laughed.

He entered the room with the others and began to eat dinner.

“Linley.” Zassler put down his utensils, then asked, “We are about to head off to the Anarchic Lands. What are your plans?”

Linley knew that Zassler was the most experienced member of his team. With an eight hundred year old man by his side, many things would be much easier to accomplish.

“Zassler, what do you feel we should do?” Linley asked.

Barker said, “Lord Linley, actually, I imagine that the Anarchic Lands must be very similar to our Eighteen Northern Duchies. You do all your talking with your fists. Given our tremendous power, we definitely would be able to quickly establish a mighty force.”

Zassler nodded. “What Barker just described is one type of method, yes. Linley...I believe we have two options right now. The first is what Barker just said. Using our reputation as Saints, we can quickly dominate a very wide swathe of territory. In the Anarchic Lands, the rally call of a Saint is very effective.”

Linley nodded slightly.

The Anarchic Lands were often in a state of chaos and warfare. The citizens caught in these chaotic battles desperately hoped for their leader to be a powerful figure. If he publicly announced himself as a Saint, there would definitely be many people willing to follow Linley.

After all, Saints would be able to provide their followers with a good deal of safety and security.

"The second method is to, at least at first, not announce your status, Linley. We'll start in the smaller regions. First, we'll find an ordinary little city where the lives of the commoners are unbearably bad. Even if I were to act by myself, I could easily take over such a small city. And then, we will slowly expand to larger cities, then erect our own Duchy. And then, we continue, one step at a time. In the past...I was a Grand Duke in the Anarchic Lands, myself." Zassler laughed.

The second method was the method which many ambitious people used.

After all, the first method could only be used by powerful experts with overwhelming force.

"Milord, what method do you wish to use?" Zassler looked at Linley. "The benefit to the first method is that it is fast. Within a year, we can easily take over countless Duchies in the Anarchic Lands. The second method is slower, but it allows us to have a more stable foundation."

Jenne, the other two girls, Barker, and his brothers all stared at Linley, waiting for his decision.

"Zassler, we'll carry out the second method." Linley made his decision after pondering for a while.

"Our target is the Radiant Church, and the Radiant Church is very skilled at seducing the masses. We need to move slowly, one step at a time, and let the commoners be fully willing to follow our orders. We need to give them a strong sense of belonging. Otherwise...even if we take over a large amount of territory, when we fight against the Radiant Church, we will have many traitors and riots." Linley said.

Zassler laughed and nodded.

"Very well then. We'll secretly expand. We won't attract any attention. Otherwise, if we start raising Linley's banner from the start, we will attract a great deal of hostility from many areas."

Zassler was quiet for a moment, then continued. "Linley, the Radiant Church and the Cult of Shadows both have tremendous influence in the Anarchic Lands. If you wish to expand there, I think...the first step would be to begin closer to the Forest of Darkness. In other words, the northernmost area of the Anarchic Lands."

Linley raised an eyebrow. "The northern part of the Anarchic Lands?"

“Right. The area near the Forest of Darkness. Because it often suffers attacks from the magical beasts of the Forest of Darkness, the people of that area are extremely sturdy and very violent. Few of the citizens of that area have much faith in the Radiant Church. They worship the strong. In addition, given our power, we don’t need to fear those low-rank and medium-rank magical beasts at all.” Zassler smiled.

Hearing Zassler’s words, Linley agreed in his mind.

“From the east edge to the west edge of the northern part of the Anarchic Lands is roughly a thousand miles. There are many small cities with only a few tens of thousands of citizens in them. There will be plenty of options for us.”

Zassler said confidently.

As Zassler saw it, occupying and taking over a city in the Anarchic Lands which had a population of just a few tens of thousands was as easy as breathing. Either Zassler or the Barker brothers could easily erect a Dukedom in the Anarchic Lands, all by themselves, much less occupy a small city.

Linley’s team was truly powerful.

He had a whole group of Saints, and Linley, Bebe, and Haeru were peak-stage Saints. Most likely, even the powerful hidden force the Radiant Church had within the Anarchic Lands couldn’t match Linley for power.

For such a team, building a base in the Anarchic Lands was incomparably easy.

The Anarchic Lands was more than half the size of the O’Brien Empire, and was definitely on par with the size of the current Radiant Church, Rohault Empire, and Rhine Empire.

Long ago, when a calculation had been run on the Anarchic Lands, it was found that the 48 Duchies had a total population of over three hundred million. Such an enormous population wasn’t much lower than the population of the Rhine Empire and the Rohault Empire. The countless years of chaotic battles hadn’t lowered the population all that much. Instead, all it had done was make the people of that area even more vicious and violent.

This sort of chaotic region was a veritable playground for powerful experts!

After passing the border, Linley and his team entered the Anarchic Lands. Upon entering their very first city in the Anarchic Lands, Linley could sense what a state of frenzy and chaos the people here were in.

“Long years of warfare have caused food to become extremely expensive in the Anarchic Lands. Although some Duchies have worked hard to try to bring an end to warfare during the harvest seasons, sometimes, they are still forced to do battle...” Zassler sighed.

The Anarchic Lands were totally different from the Holy Union and the O’Brien Empire.

In the cities of the Holy Union and the O’Brien Empire, one could sense a peaceful, amiable aura. Noble madams and young noble ladies there all wore lavish clothes and casually strolled about the streets.

But in the Anarchic Lands, heavily armored warriors could be seen everywhere, and the cities were filled with a ferocious aura, giving the sense that a single wrong word could result in murder. This was the norm, here.

Linley’s team continued to travel towards the north. As they travelled, they carefully observed the local areas, gaining a better understanding of the Anarchic Lands.

“A priest?” Linley saw from afar someone dressed as a priest. “Damn the Radiant Church. Chapels can be seen everywhere in the Anarchic Lands, and all of them openly preach and proselytize for the Radiant Church...”

As they continued to travel, Linley’s heart grew heavy.

The Radiant Church’s influence here was indeed tremendous.

Linley’s team moved quite quickly. After journeying for roughly ten days, they arrived at the northern part of the Anarchic Lands. Linley and his people entered a small city known as ‘Blackdirt City’.

It was noon.

Within a private room in an ordinary hotel, Zassler said to Linley, “Based on my investigations from earlier this morning, the city governor of this place, Blackdirt City, is a classic example of all brawns, no brains. All he wants to do is be the ruler of a small city and enjoy the life of a local tyrant. He is extremely tyrannical and oppressive to the common folk...I think that this should be quite suitable for us to take over as our first little city.”

“But this is only the first city we’ve considered!” Linley was rather surprised.

Zassler laughed. “This is normal. In the Anarchic Lands, aside from a very few Duchies, most rulers are extremely oppressive towards their citizens. After all, war

could break out at any time and they might lose their power. Naturally, they'll want to enjoy it while they can."

Linley nodded slightly.

"Fine. Then let's start with this Blackdirt City." Linley immediately decided.

The eyes of the nearby Barker brothers lit up. Gates was the first to say excitedly, "Lord, don't worry. You don't need to do a thing. We'll just head on over and kill that leader, and then terrify those few thousand soldiers into submission. There'll be nothing difficult at all about it."

The five Barker brothers had led armies to war in the Eighteen Northern Duchies. They very much loved that sort of blood-pumping life.

"Lord, don't worry. Tonight, you'll be living inside the governor's mansion of Blackdirt City." Barker slapped his chest as he spoke.

Chapter 48

Noon time. The blazing sun hung high in the western skies, baking Blackdirt City with its scorching rays. The garrison soldiers of Blackdirt City were lazily and casually strolling about within Blackdirt City, while a few poor guards were being baked by the sun while standing guard on the walls.

"This damn weather. It is unbearably hot during the day, and deathly cold at night!" A large man dressed in tattered armor cursed softly. Him and the nine companions by his side were one of the squads belonging to the city guard.

Whenever the common citizens of the city saw these soldiers, they immediately fled away, their faces full of fear.

Seeing this, another warrior cursed softly. "Now that I'm working under that greedy, fat pig, some of my elders are beginning to look down at me. That fat pig is too greedy!"

"That motherfucker. If it weren't for the fact that I have a wife and son to feed, I wouldn't do this job." Another warrior agreed.

In Blackdirt City, that fat city governor had an extremely poor reputation. These warriors who had joined the army for the sake of feeding their families all secretly cursed this vile city governor behind his back, but they didn't dare to fight against

him. This was because the city governor had an extremely powerful and despotic son, who was a peak-stage warrior of the seventh rank. That sort of power was more than enough for one to become a local tyrant in small cities such as this.

“Faster, faster!” From nearby, the hoof steps of a knight’s horse could be heard coming towards them at high speed. Seeing the soldiers from afar, the knight immediately cried out loudly, “Brothers, quick, come and pay your respects to the new city governor! That greedy, fat pig is dead! Quick, go pay your respects to the new city governor!”

The ten men in the squad were startled. They glanced at each other, then immediately began to laugh with excitement.

“Haha...quick, let’s go to the governor’s mansion.”

In the Anarchic Lands, the common citizens had virtually no sense of belonging. This month, they would be ruled by one city governor; next month, it might be a different one. The commoners didn’t ask for much; they only wanted to have enough to feed themselves and their families.

The governor’s mansion of Blackdirt City could be considered a city within a city.

Blackdirt City’s army was divided into two major battalions, with each battalion having 1800 people. One of the battalions was the city guard, while the other was the city governor’s personal guard. One could imagine how afraid of death the city governor was, to use half of his military force to protect his own mansion.

There were a large number of soldiers currently centered within the city governor’s mansion. All 3600 soldiers quickly assembled there.

The city governor’s mansion could easily fit in 1800 people. Atop a broad training field, Barker and his brothers stood in the center. Their rippling muscles and massive, powerful bodies made them look like gods of battle. Those terrifying black greataxes they carried on their back were especially frightening.

The soldiers all stood there, keeping quiet out of fear.

“Brothers.” A powerful man with short golden hair roared loudly, “That vile, fat pig and his son have already been chopped into meat paste by these five lords. These five lords are all mighty combatants of the ninth rank. Invincible combatants of the ninth rank!!!”

As soon as they heard the words, ‘combatants of the ninth rank’, all of the soldiers were stunned.

“Combatants of the ninth rank? Combatants of the ninth rank would come to a little city like ours?” Whispers could be heard circulating throughout the crowd.

“Bam!” Gates took a few steps forward, his demonically powerful aura causing the nearby soldiers to all take a step back. Gates laughed thunderously, “All of you, listen up. From today onwards, Blackdirt City belongs to we five brothers. My big brother, Barker, is the city governor!”

Gates drew out the greataxe from his back. Staring at the surrounding people, he said, “If any of you have any objections to my big brother, Barker, being the city governor, you are welcome to come compete with me!”

Who would dare compete against such a terrifying god of battle?

The city governor’s son, who had terrified Blackdirt City for so long, had been chopped to death by a single blow from Gates’ greataxe. Then again, most of the soldiers present hadn’t personally witnessed this themselves. The natural, violent atmosphere of the region caused some of the soldiers to stare at Gates questioningly. Just being physically big didn’t necessarily mean someone was very powerful!

“This greataxe of mine was made from countless precious materials. It weighs 5300 pounds!” Gates casually tossed his greataxe forward, and it soared agilely through the air, landing against a nearby boulder which the soldiers used for weight training.

The ten-thousand pound boulder didn’t even move when struck. Many of the watching soldiers were stunned. “Could it be that this greataxe is made from wood, and it just has a layer of metallic dye on top of it?”

“Boom!” The boulder suddenly exploded and disintegrated into a storm of dust.

Wielding something heavy as though it were light!

All the onlookers stared with their mouths gaping open. These soldiers had heard of people being able to smash a ten-thousand pound boulder, but to cause it to instantly disintegrate into a pile of dust...this wasn’t something which could be accomplished just through brute strength. All the soldiers turned to look at Gates with adoration and worship in their eyes.

Gates delightedly let out a thunderous laugh. He had used this technique in the past in the Eighteen Northern Duchies as well. The Anarchic Lands and the Eighteen Northern Duchies were very similar; powerful experts were deeply venerated.

“Looks like there are no objections.” Gates said loudly. “Wonderful. From today forward, you are now the soldiers of my big brother. There’s a benefit to working for

my big brother. In the future, your military pay will be triple that of your current military pay!"

Triple military pay?

The three thousand plus soldiers stared in shock, but then, they all let a thunderous, sky-shaking cry...

"Long live Lord Barker!"

What more could they ask for? These five experts possessed unbelievable power, and they gave a very high military pay. Naturally, they loved leaders like this!

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The city of Blackdirt now had a new city governor. It was the mighty Barker and his four brothers, all of whom were powerful warriors of the ninth rank. Their weapons alone weighed 5300 pounds! Having such a powerful leader was something which all of the citizens of Blackdirt City celebrated over.

The most exciting thing was...

The Lord City Governor had declared that as long they were obedient and faithful, the citizens of Blackdirt City would be forever exempted from paying taxes!

Forever exempted from paying taxes! In the Anarchic Lands, this could be described as a miracle. After all, if there were no taxes, where would one have money to pay their soldiers? But this problem, to Linley, was no problem at all. He held the terrifying amount of wealth which the royal clan of the Kingdom of Fenlai had accumulated for thousands of years.

He could casually pull out a hundred million gold coins, and that would already be more than enough.

Powerful leaders and high salaries, combined with no taxes...given the above, the people here quickly gained the hope and desire to forever live under this administration. And because of the high military pay, many people now desired to join the army.

At the same time, when some of the commoners nearby Blackdirt City learned about this, they hurriedly immigrated to Blackdirt City.

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Half a year after the change in leadership in Blackdirt City.

Within the city governor's mansion. The newly selected housekeeper, Nemi [Nei'mi], was currently giving a detailed report to this mysterious 'Lord Ley'. As the administrator for various matters in Blackdirt City, Nemi knew that although the city governor was nominally Barker, in truth, the highest authority here was that mysterious Lord Ley.

"Milord, the population of Blackdirt Town numbers nearly eighty thousand. If we add that number to the large number of surrounding villages, then in total...the population under Blackdirt City's control is a total of around 700,000. Currently, our military is expanding as well. We now have a total of five battalions, all at full strength. The five battalions number a total of nine thousand soldiers." Nemi said respectfully.

Linley, seated above him, nodded slightly upon hearing this.

"Enough, Nemi. You can retire now." Barker glanced at him.

"Yes, Lord City Governor." Nemi immediately left respectfully.

Right now, the people seated in the room were Linley and the other core members of the team. According to the decision which Zassler and Linley had originally made, to outsiders, they said that Lord Barker was the city governor. 'Barker' was a very ordinary name. Nobody else knew which 'Barker' this was.

"Lord, you really gave us a good scare when you casually brought out a magicrystal card with a hundred million gold in it." Barker chortled.

Linley laughed. "Don't worry about the financial side of things!" In the past, Linley had essentially stripped away thousands of years of accumulated wealth from the Kingdom of Fenlai.

Zassler said, "Linley, the reason we are being so generous to the citizens of Blackdirt City is because we want Blackdirt City to become our strongest, most resilient base, and to make sure that the people here are absolutely loyal to us! It is enough that we exempt this city from paying taxes. In the future, at most, we can just lower the tax rate in our cities. In addition, in order to function well, a nation needs to be able to be self-sufficient. It can't always rely on outside money. It has to be self-sustaining!"

Linley nodded.

"I don't know much about managing a country. I'll let Zassler and Jenne handle these matters." Linley laughed as he glanced at Jenne. Zassler had controlled a Duchy before in the Anarchic Lands, while Jenne had helped her little brother

administrate the affairs of the prefectural city of Cerre for multiple years. Both of them knew much more about city management than Linley did.

Jenne nodded and laughed. "Big brother Linley, the most important part of being a leader is knowing who to use. Just let me handle it."

Zassler concurred. "Jenne is right. Linley...you are our standard-bearer. In the Anarchic Lands, an ultimate expert has a great deal of influence. Look at the War God. The War God always stays on War God Mountain and never gets personally involved in anything, but everyone understands that so long as the War God is alive, then the O'Brien Empire will never collapse."

"Lord, in the future, your relationship to our nation will be the same as the War God's relationship to the O'Brien Empire." Barker agreed.

Linley nodded slightly. "I understand your reasoning. Oh, right. Yesterday, I took a stroll around Blackdirt City. I saw that a few dozen kilometers northeast of Blackdirt City, there is a small mountain known as Mt. Blackraven. I plan to train there."

Linley could sense the vastness of both the Laws of the Earth and the Laws of the Wind. Linley wished to spend a large amount of time subsuming himself in them, and spend some time attuning to them and understanding them.

.....

In the central-southern part of the Anarchic Lands, there was a prefectural city with hundreds of thousands of citizens. Within a room on the fifth floor of a five story tall hotel, an old man with white-streaked hair opened a letter, carefully reading its contents.

"What I feared the most has come to pass!" The old man began to frown. "The Emperor ordered us not to act against Linley and just observe him. A while ago, we learned that Linley's group had entered the Anarchic Lands. At that time, we thought he was just engaging in tourism. Who would've thought that they'd take over a city? What exactly are they planning?"

The old man had a bad feeling.

Linley was a major foe of the Radiant Church. A foe which they didn't want to have to fight.

But now...

"I hope Linley is just messing around and having fun in the Anarchic Lands." The old man was frowning. What he feared the most was...that Linley had come to the Anarchic Lands expressly to deal with the Radiant Church. "We don't want to stir up trouble with him, but if he insists on stirring up trouble with us, we'll have to act."

The old man was a high level manager for the Radiant Church in the Anarchic Lands. He knew exactly how powerful Linley's side was.

"As for now...let's just watch. Let's see what Linley plans to do."

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Outside of Blackdirt City, in a small mountain roughly a thousand meters tall which was located in the direction of the Forest of Darkness, Linley was seated in the meditative position on the top of a large tree. The treetop swayed along with the blowing wind, and Linley swayed along with it, as gently and as agilely as a leaf.

He was carrying a 3600 pounds adamantine heavy sword, and yet he was seated on the crown of a tree. Linley had indeed reached a very high level in his ability to control the wind.

"Slow. Fast. It isn't that simple..." Linley was constantly pondering his 'Tempos of the Wind' technique. The Tempos of the Wind was actually utilizing two contradictory aspects of the wind in perfect harmony, with the clash between these two aspects creating a terrifyingly sharp blade of air.

But Linley was discovering that as he continued to study the individual aspects of 'Slow' and 'Fast', these aspects had additional astonishing secrets that had yet to be revealed to him.

"The limits to the Profound Truths of Slowness...the limits to the Analytics of Hyperspeed..." Linley was totally absorbed in his meditations on the Elemental Laws. This sort of meditation relied entirely on a single sudden spark of insight. Perhaps Linley would suddenly gain an insight onto the Laws of the Earth, at which point Linley would begin to analyze the Laws of the Earth. If he suddenly gained insight into the Laws of the Wind, he would go study that instead.

Those days he spent in training on Mt. Blackraven passed very quickly....

Chapter 49

The sun was high in the sky. Reynolds was currently hiking through a particularly large mountain.

"I should have entered the Anarchic Lands by now." Reynolds himself wasn't too clear how far he had walked, after having hurried for ten days. Reynolds generally headed in whatever direction looked the most desolate. Even if he saw cities from afar, he wouldn't enter them.

The mountain that Reynolds was now hiking on was extremely large and took up an enormous amount of land.

After hiking for a long time, Reynolds arrived at one of the mountain peaks and gazed around him. Suddenly, he discovered that this giant mountain actually had a tiny little mountain village in the center. Reynolds licked his dry, chapped lips. Grabbing a fistful of long rattan vines, he began to climb down into the little mountain village in the center of the mountain.

This little mountain village had people inside it. When they saw Reynolds walk in, they glanced at him with curious stares.

Clearly...they rarely saw visitors.

There were quite a few people in this little mountain village. Guessing based on what his eyes had seen, Reynolds estimated that there were several thousand people here. There was even an open-air inn that was rather simply made. Reynolds walked over and immediately sat down and said, "Two cups of water, and then some dishes and a bottle of wine."

But as soon as he sat down, Reynolds noticed something...

"This place..." Reynolds' heart shook.

He suddenly had discovered that every single person here emanated the aura of an expert. From what Reynolds could tell, there were many warriors of the sixth and seventh ranks, and even warriors of the eighth rank...as well as some mighty magi. Not warriors. Magi. And extremely powerful ones.

"Friend, how did you end up here?" A bald man came over with a bottle of wine and two bowls. "Come, let's drink."

Reynolds now sensed that this mountain village was no ordinary place. He immediately replied, "I came from across the border with the Rohault Empire. I was planning to enter the Anarchic Lands. I didn't take any of the main roads, and hiked my way through the mountains to the north. Whenever I encountered a river, I

swam my way through. Whenever I encountered a mountain, I hiked through. I didn't expect that while hiking through this mountain, I would've run into this little mountain village."

The bald man nodded and laughed. "So that's the case."

"No wonder. There's no roads near our village, and this mountain is extremely desolate. Generally speaking, we'll usually go eight or ten years without seeing a single outsider." Another man walked over, laughing.

Reynolds was growing anxious.

The two people in front of him were both exceedingly powerful, perhaps at the seventh or the eighth rank.

"What in the world is this place? Why are there so many experts here?" Reynolds secretly wondered.

Drinking and chatting with these two people, Reynolds discovered...that the people of this mysterious mountain village weren't totally cut off from the outside world. In fact, they knew a great deal about the outside world.

"Princess Monica [Meng'ni'ka] is coming." The bald man suddenly said. Many people turned to look in one direction, and Reynolds did as well...

He saw a beautiful young woman with long jade hair walk over with a serving maid behind her, while greeting the other villagers along the way warmly. Seeing this beautiful woman, Reynolds instantly was stunned. That beautiful face...that friendly smile...

Despite often having dalliances amidst the flowers, Reynolds felt utterly bewitched and smitten.

"I think...I have found the place I was meant to be."

The playboy Reynolds had dallied with quite a few young noble ladies. But there hadn't been a single person who had successfully moved his heart...which was why he was still single up till now. But this girl in this mysterious mountain village had a very unique aura, one which made Reynolds' heart shake.

The girl named Monica glanced at Reynolds. Reynolds instantly discovered that Monica's clear eyes contained a hint of jade light. She looked like one of the legendary spirits, utterly bewitching. Monica laughed and spoke to him. "Hello there, outsider."

Reynolds immediately rose to his feet and said with great courtesy, "Beautiful Princess Monica, my name is Reynolds."

Monica suddenly glanced at Reynolds' left hand. She opened her mouth in surprise, then looked at Reynolds. "What happened to your hand?"

"It was injured by someone." Reynolds said casually.

Monica immediately walked towards him. "Stretch your hand out." Reynolds didn't ask any questions, immediately stretching his left hand out. The wound which had been left by those steel pincers was heart-shakingly frightful to behold. Monica's lips began to move slightly, and a short while later...

Countless specks of light entered Reynolds left hand like a mirage-like nebula. Reynolds could clearly sense that the wound on his left hand was rapidly healing, and two new fingers were growing out from it. In the blink of an eye, Reynolds' left hand returned to a perfect state, as though it had never been injured.

"This...this..." Reynolds was shocked, and he stared at the young lady named Monica in surprise.

He hadn't expected that this young lady named Monica was a light-style magus, and an extremely powerful one. Her power wasn't one whit inferior to Reynolds'.

When Reynolds saw the look of concentration on Monica's face, his heart immediately began to thump wildly.

.....

Nightfall. The sun was setting in the west, and the skies had a large amount of red, flame-like clouds.

On the grass by the mountain village, Reynolds and Monica were walking side by side. Reynolds looked at Monica's beautiful face, and in his heart, he felt a hint of contentment. He had already stayed here in this mysterious mountain village for more than a month now.

No one in the mountain village had suggested that he leave.

During his month in the mountain village, Reynolds had learned that the vast majority of the villagers here had never left the mountain village. Only a very small percentage would occasionally make trips to the outside world. When they returned, they would inform the other villagers of the events of the outside world.

Monica was only twenty years old, but she was already a light-style magus of the seventh rank. In terms of talent, she was actually superior to Reynolds. She was even more talented than Reynolds.

"I can't continue like this. I have to inform my parents and Third Bro that I am alive." Reynolds wanted to meet his friends and family, but Monica's allure for him was simply too strong. And to Monica, this outsider, Reynolds, knew many things. Whenever she chatted with him, Monica found that she could learn many things about the outside world.

Reynolds was particularly good at making conversation. This made Monica very happy whenever she was with him.

"If I were to always be with Monica, how wonderful would that be?" Reynolds' heart was filled with hope.

"Miss Monica." A voice suddenly came from behind them, and a silver-haired middle-aged man walked towards them. Reynolds was startled. He hadn't noticed this man approach them. Clearly, the man was extremely powerful.

"Uncle Miller [Mi'le]." When Monica turned her head and saw this middle-aged man with short silver hair, she immediately called out in laughter.

Miller had a simple, honest face. Glancing at Reynolds, he then laughed towards Monica in a friendly manner. "Miss Monica, it is getting late. Your mother is waiting for you to go home and eat dinner." Monica nodded, then smiled towards Reynolds. "Big brother Reynolds, I'm going home for now. See you later."

Reynolds smiled and nodded as well.

After Monica left, Miller stared at Reynolds. "Outsider kid, you've been in our mountain village for some time now. You now need to make a choice..."

"Choice?" Reynolds felt surprised.

Miller nodded calmly. "Since you've been able to find us, that means that destiny has led you here. You now have two choices. The first is to forever stay in our mountain village, and become one of our villagers, never to leave. The second is to immediately leave, and never enter again. You only have two choices. If you disobey, you will definitely die."

These cold, calm words made Reynolds' heart quiver.

Leave forever? Or never leave the mountain village again?

Reynolds didn't want to make either choice.

"Mr. Miller," Reynolds hurriedly said, "Based on what I know, aren't there some people in the village who occasionally go outside?"

Miller glanced at him, then chuckled. "True. Our mountain village has a yearly contest. Anyone who makes it into the top ten during this tournament is permitted to leave the village and make a trip to the outside world. But given your current power...you aren't even able to rank in our top hundred, much less top ten."

Reynolds was very anxious.

"Although I currently can't make the ranking, in the future I might." Reynolds had already made his decision. "Mr. Miller, I have decided to become a member of this village." Although Reynolds loved his parents, when he was in the army, he often went a year or two without seeing his parents a single time. So long as his parents knew that he was alive, that was all that matter. In the future, he would have a chance to meet them. There shouldn't be too much of a problem.

Reynolds knew that his parents could definitely live for another century or two.

But Monica...Reynolds was worried that if he left, he would regret it for the rest of his life.

Miller nodded slightly. "Welcome to the village. Remember. You are not allowed to leave the village without permission. If it is discovered that you did...you will definitely die. No matter what, you had best not harbor any doubts about how powerful our village is." Miller immediately turned and prepared to leave.

"Mr. Miller." Reynolds hurriedly said.

Miller turned to look at him. "What is it?"

"When the other people in the village leave, can they help me carry a message out?" Reynolds asked.

Miller nodded. "Yes they can. However, you cannot reveal any information regarding the village. In two days, I'll be leaving the village. If you have any messages, I can help you transmit them."

Reynolds felt a surge of joy, and he hurriedly said, "Lord Miller, when you leave the village, please go to any of the Dawson Conglomerate's branches and tell them that I, Reynolds Dunstan, am not dead. Right now, I am happily alive, and I hope my friends and family won't be worried about me."

"The Dawson Conglomerate?" Miller glanced at him, then nodded.

"Lord Miller." Reynolds suddenly realized something. "Didn't you just say that only the top ten in the annual tournament are allowed to make a trip? Why is it that you can leave whenever you want?"

Miller glanced at him. "Once you are my level of power, you can also leave whenever you wish." As he spoke, with a single movement Miller suddenly vanished from in front of Reynolds. Reynolds' heart was filled with shock; this speed was simply too terrifying!

"Milord, that Reynolds isn't very powerful, but it seems as though Miss Monica feels rather..." Miller stood to one side respectfully, while a handsome, refined-looking middle-aged man with long black hair sat on a stone chair, casually sipping wine.

The refined middle-aged man laughed calmly. "Monica is free to like whoever she wants. Don't force her. For Reynolds to choose to remain in the village means that he has courage, at least."

"But the Madame..." Miller said.

The refined middle-aged man laughed. "Haha...as for that, there's nothing I can do either. If that Reynolds really has taken a liking to my daughter, then all I can do is suggest that he work hard. Otherwise, he won't even be able to pass my wife's approval."

"Tomorrow, when you head to the Forest of Darkness, be careful. Don't irritate the King of the Forest of Darkness." The refined middle-aged man glanced at Miller.

"Yes, milord." Miller said respectfully.

The next morning, a blur suddenly streaked out at high speed away from the mountain village. In the blink of an eye, it pierced through the skies as it flew towards the north at high speed. The speed at which it travelled was a good deal faster than even Linley's speed in full Dragonform. An hour or so later, that blur arrived at the Forest of Darkness.

"Hrm?" The astonishing speed lessened, and from high up above, Miller stared down below.

Blackdirt City was located quite close to the Forest of Darkness, only fifty or so kilometers away from it. Miller was currently directly above Mt. Blackraven. Although he had been flying at high speed, he could sense a powerful amount of wind-style energy coming from below.

“Someone else who also trains in the Laws of the Wind?” Miller’s eyes lit up.

Miller was studying the Laws of the Wind as well. He carefully examined Mt. Blackraven, and saw a human form, dressed in a deep blue robe who was wielding a violet longsword. That human form constantly flickered about in multiple places in Mt. Blackraven at an astonishingly fast speed.

“His level of understanding is quite excellent. It has been centuries since I’ve sparred with another wind-style expert.” Miller’s heart itched. He flew down at high speed.

By now, Linley had noticed this human form flying down from the skies at high speed.

Miller landed directly atop the crown of a tree on Mt. Blackraven. Standing on the tree’s crown, he stared at the nearby Linley and laughed loudly, “I am Miller, also a student of the Laws of the Wind. My friend, would you be willing to have a competition with me?”

Chapter 50

Linley looked at the man standing on the tree crown.

His short silver hair made him look very energetic and intrepid. That wavy blue robe fluttered in the wind, making him seem agile and graceful.

“An expert!” Linley had the feeling that this silver-haired man’s power was no less than his own.

“I am Linley.” Linley didn’t try to hide his identity.

“Linley? The O’Brien Empire’s Linley?” Miller said with surprise, but then he laughed. “I’ve long heard that the O’Brien Empire has a twenty seven year old genius, who has reached a high level of achievement as a sculptor, as a magus, and as a warrior. I didn’t expect that today, I’d be able to encounter you. You were on par with Haydson. I, Miller, would like to spar with you, brother.”

Linley had a very good impression of Miller as well.

Miller was open and direct, just the type of person Linley liked.

“Very well. Then I will have a good sparring match with you, brother Miller.” Having spent such a long period of time in training, Linley also desired to have a good sparring match against an expert. Perhaps he would gain a sudden insight.

Linley removed the deep blue robe covering his upper body, letting it be bare. And then, black scales quickly began to cover Linley’s body, and those ferocious spikes emerged from his forehead, spine, elbows, and knees. Seeing this, Miller’s eyes lit up. “Dragonblood Warrior. Haha, I’ve heard of this for some time now...”

Linley’s body began to be covered with that roiling, swirling layer of azurish-black battle-qi.

Wielding Bloodviolet in his hands, Linley looked at Miller. “Come.”

With a flip of his hand, Miller withdrew a silvery-white longsword from out of nowhere. Laughing loudly, he said, “Linley, you must be careful. The power of my sword technique isn’t much weaker than Haydson’s attack.” Miller spoke with total confidence. Linley was secretly startled. Linley knew very well how powerful Haydson’s “Worldbreaker” attack was.

“Careful!” Miller shouted loudly, then his body slashed through the air, immediately appearing next to Linley.

With a kick of his feet, Linley leapt backwards at high speed, but Miller’s longsword still brushed against Linley’s Pulseguard Defense. In the blink of an eye, Linley appeared atop a large tree several hundred meters away. “Such incredible speed. It seems I have to use the Windshadow spell.”

From this exchange, Linley immediately understood that in terms of understanding the ‘Speed’ aspect of the wind, he was inferior to this man.

Linley began to chant the words to the Windshadow magic spell. As for Miller, he paused for a while, still wielding that silver longsword as he waited for Linley to complete his Windshadow spell. Only when Linley did so did Miller charge towards Linley at high speed again. “Linley, show me your ultimate attack.”

“Whoosh!” “Whoosh!”

Linley’s body moved at a similarly high speed. Right now, the two were on par as far as speed went, and they dodged and attacked at high speed. Towards the attacking Miller, with a flip of his hand, Linley utilized the ‘Rippling Wind’ technique, and in an instant, countless violet sword tips slashed down, covering Miller’s entire body.

"Excellent!" Miller laughed loudly, and suddenly, the silvery-white longsword seemed to slowly draw a circle in front of him.

Although it seemed to be slow, in actuality, before Linley's 'Rippling Wind' attacks managed to land on Miller, they were all destroyed by that 'circle'. Linley was secretly delighted. "Has Miller trained in a type of extremely 'Slow' aspect of the wind?"

Slow. Fast!

The so called 'slow' and 'fast' weren't purely about 'speed'; it was about a higher level of understanding. For example, although Miller's attack seemed to be slow, in actuality, it wasn't the slightest bit slower than Linley's 'Rippling Wind' technique.

"Miller, take another one of my attacks." Linley shouted loudly.

Linley and Miller were constantly dodging. With each light tap against the tree leaves, the two could instantly change direction at high speed. Suddenly, the two once again clashed in the air above Mt. Blackraven. Linley's dreamlike Bloodviolet longsword seemed to encompass both an extremely fast speed as well as an extremely slow tempo, combining these two polar opposites into a single seemingly perfect whole.

"Excellent." Miller let out a loud shout of surprised joy.

Miller's longsword suddenly reduced in speed to an extremely low level, as though it weighed ten trillion pounds and could barely move. Linley could sense how extremely slothful the movements of the opponent's sword had become!

But his Bloodviolet sword remained unable to break through this sword.

"Boom!" The two swords collided.

Linley felt as though he had suddenly been hit at high speed by something weighing ten trillion pounds. His body shuddered and was sent flying against the nearby mountain cliffs, smashing into the heart of the mountain. On the cliffs, a human-shaped tunnel could now be seen.

"Whoosh." A while later, Linley came flying back out.

Miller was extremely excited. "Linley, your sword art... 'Slow' and 'Fast'? Two totally opposite aspects. This...this..." Miller felt as though a light had gone off inside his mind, as though he had suddenly realized something. Linley was also extremely shocked and delighted as well.

Linley didn't even care about that line of blood trailing down from the corner of his lips. The only thing he was thinking about was that sword technique his opponent had just used. "Miller defended against my 'Rippling Wind' attack using a technique which was gentle as a breeze. But this technique he just used was extremely powerful, not one whit inferior than Haydson's 'Worldbreaker' technique. If it wasn't for the fact that I have gained some additional insights into the 'Throbbing Pulse of the World', I probably would've been severely injured."

"That sword technique was derived from a variation of the 'Slow' aspect of the Laws of the Wind. During that moment, it seemed as though space itself had frozen." Linley could still clearly remember how he had felt when facing that sword.

That sword had moved so slowly, as though it weighed ten trillion pounds, but space itself seemed to have frozen as well. Linley had clearly sensed that his opponent's sword was extremely slow, but despite the fact that his own sword was extremely fast, in that moment, it somehow wasn't faster than his opponent's.

Miller and Linley both had looks of surprised delight on their face. They smiled, standing there in mid-air.

Recovering from their ponderings, the two looked at each other and grinned. Clearly, both had gained certain insights.

"Linley, I had never imagined that two opposite aspects could actually be used to aid each other...you truly have helped me out." Miller was a little bit excited. Indeed, in that mysterious mountain village, none of his friends trained in the Laws of the Wind, and thus they were unable to help him."

Linley spoke words of thanks as well. "Miller, I've been pondering how to continue analyzing the 'Slow' and 'Fast' aspect and how to train them. You've helped me clearly see how I should go about it as well."

"As far as my insights into the Laws of the Wind go, I don't have any deeper insights to show you. Let's just call a stop to it for now. What do you say?" Linley advised.

Miller pursed his lips. "Linley, don't be modest. I know...that your true, most powerful attack is with a heavy sword. Supposedly, despite Haydson's ridiculously strong defense, he was still heavily injured by you. Come. Let me have a try." Miller said expectantly.

Linley hesitated slightly.

Once the 'Profound Truths of the Earth' was used, it would be very dangerous. It might kill him.

"It's fine. Linley, just come. Let me have a taste of your most powerful attack. My defense is extremely formidable." Miller laughed confidently.

Seeing how confident the man was and how he had requested Linley repeatedly to attack, Linley nodded. At the same time, Linley had made up his mind that he would execute the Hundred Layered Waves attack of the Profound Truths of the Earth. He wouldn't go all the way to his limits of 138 Layered Waves. Given the power his opponent had displayed, he should be able to withstand the Hundred Layered Waves.

In the air above Mt. Blackraven, Linley and Miller stood, facing each other. Linley was now wielding the adamantine heavy sword.

"Come." Miller said with a bit of excitement.

"Miller, be careful." As he spoke, Linley suddenly charged towards Miller, creating a terrifying sonic boom. Miller just stood there, casually wielding his silvery longsword and slowly waving it in front of himself.

Space once again froze.

Linley's adamantine heavy sword agilely and lightly smashed downwards. A silvery longsword that was very light, but seemingly weighed ten trillion pounds. An adamantine heavy sword that was very heavy, yet seemed to move very agilely and gracefully. As soon as the adamantine heavy sword drew near that silver longsword, it was caught within the 'frozen space'.

The two swords intersected!

"Boom!"

Profound Truths of the Earth – Hundred Layered Waves!

What shocked Linley was that when those vibrational waves passed through that 'frozen space', it quickly began to weaken in power. By the time it passed through and entered Miller's body, it had lost more than half of its power.

But despite that...

Miller's eyes lit up. His entire body suddenly was surrounded by waves of energy, but despite that, a hint of blood still came out from the corner of his lips. He stared at Linley in astonishment. "Linley, your attack truly is bizarre. My defense can be considered a very special one, but your attack..."

When experts did battle, they had to be proficient in speed, defense, and attack. If they were weak in a single area, then they would find themselves in danger.

Miller's defense was very special as well.

As he circulated the Dragonblood battle-qi in his body, Linley's wounds rapidly began to heal, but he stared at Miller in astonishment. "Miller, that sword of yours...I keep on having the feeling that it seems to have caused space itself to change." It was precisely because space had changed that Linley's vibrational attacks would weaken so much when passing through it.

Miller laughed. "It does indeed cause space to change. I can't clearly explain it. When you gain insight on this aspect, you will naturally understand it."

Linley nodded slightly as he returned to his human form.

"Alright, then. Linley, I'm very glad to have met you today and made friends with you. If you ever want to come looking for me, you can come to the southern reaches of the Anarchic Lands. There's a relatively well-known city there known as 'Southmount City'. Roughly a hundred kilometers south of Southmount City is a large mountain, and within that mountain there is a small mountain village. I live there." Miller laughed.

Linley nodded in appreciation. "When I am free, I will definitely go."

"Several of my good friends, as well as my Lord, live there as well. If you come there and spar, you will improve more quickly as well." Miller said warmly. "I have some business in the Forest of Darkness. I'll have to bid you farewell for now."

After saying his goodbyes to Miller, Linley watched as Miller rapidly flew towards the north, into the endless Forest of Darkness. Then Linley chuckled and, with a leap, flew to a nearby flat stone. He sat down atop of it into the meditative posture, quietly reflecting on the insights he had gained on various profound mysteries during that sparring match...

....

To the north of the Yulan continent was the boundless Northern Sea. North of the Northern Sea was the Arctic Icecap. The Arctic Icecap was extremely vast, several times larger than the entire Yulan continent. However, aside from some powerful magical beasts who lived there, there were virtually no inhabitants. The Arctic Icecap was formed from nothing more than extremely hard ice.

"Whoooooosh."

Cold wind slashed past the glaciers like icy knives, shearing pieces of ice off. The Arctic Icecap was an extremely cold place, and extremely dangerous. Even powerful warriors would find it very hard to live here. However, this bitter, desolate environment did have a few experts who lived here quietly.

Beneath an iceberg that was tens of thousands of meters high, two experts engaged in battle at high speed. One of them was Olivier, with his opponent being a very well muscled, yet skinny, cruel looking man with short jade hair. The cruel-looking man was using nothing more than a pair of dark golden boxing gloves.

“Whoosh!” Lightshadow flashing, Olivier appeared in the air above the cruel-looking man, then chopped downwards with his sword.

The cruel-looking man dodged this attack, and then immediately viciously kicked out with his leg against Olivier. On the surface of the leg was a clearly visible edge of air, and it chopped against Olivier like a warblade. The blade of air was far more distinct and visible than the one produced by Linley’s ‘Tempos of the Wind’ technique.

“Boom!”

Olivier and his sword were both sent flying by this kick, landing and smashing viciously against the tough, frozen ground. “Boom!” The icy ground split apart, and dozens of enormous cracks appeared. Olivier vomited a mouthful of fresh blood onto the ground.

“Hmph. Olivier, you dare challenge Lord Rutherford [La’si’fu’de]? You can’t even beat me. In the Arctic Icecap, you are nothing more than the bottom rung. Train hard.” The cruel-looking man said coldly, and then he flew into the skies at high speed, disappearing into that enormous iceberg that was tens of thousands of meters high.

Olivier coughed once, then stood up. Staring upwards at the iceberg, he said, “Next time, I will definitely defeat you.” And then, Olivier’s body flickered, then disappeared from the snowy land.

[End of Book 09]